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# THE FRENCH IN INDIA

## FIRST ESTABLISHMENT AND STRUGGLE

BY

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WITH A FOREWORD

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# FOREWORD

It was Malleson who first essayed in English the fascinating story of the French enterprise in India. His works have long been out of print and to some extent out of date as well. Meanwhile fresh materials have been brought to light and with the passage of time the clouds of contemporary controversy have sufficiently cleared to a better view and a fairer perspective. The story moreover will bear retelling many times and Mr. Sen has done well in attempting a fresh examination of the extant sources.

An Indian student working in India on a subject like this is faced with obvious difficulties. Even in normal times the original sources are not within easy access, in times of war they are entirely out of his reach. It is not therefore out of choice alone that the author had to limit himself to the first French naval expedition to India. De la Haye has left his own account of the voyage and his narrative can be supplemented and checked by two other contemporary records of exceptional value and interest. Francois Martin kept a diary which he later revised and rewrote in the form of a Memoir. Abbé Carré, who took a prominent part in the French affairs in India left a graphic account of what he did, heard and saw.

Martin's Memoirs long remained unpublished though the manuscript was at least once transcribed with a view to printing. A few years before the last world war this invaluable work was published under the able editorship of Professor Alfred Martineau and thus became easily accessible to interested students all over the world. The only manuscript of Carré's *Itinerary* found its way to the India Office Library and there remained unnoticed until the late Professor Johnston rescued it from unmerited oblivion. By a happy inspiration the authorities of the Calcutta University acquired a rotograph copy of Carré's *Itinerary* as soon as it was brought to the public notice. It is pleasing to think that even if the original manuscript had suffered from accidents of war the *Itinerary* would not have been lost to posterity. The publication of Martin's *Mémoires* and the acquisition by the Calcutta University of a rotograph copy of Carré's *Itinerary* enabled Mr. Sen to undertake the present work when contact with libraries and archives offices in France was no longer possible. It is understood that an annotated English version of Carré's *Itinerary* by Sir Charles and Lady Fawcett is under preparation and will be published under the auspices of the Hakluyt Society.

De la Haye's expedition in many ways offered a fair indication of future French successes and failures in India. Well conceived, well organised and opportunely timed, the expedition proved a dismal failure for reasons not beyond human control. France was perfectly within her rights when she attempted to capture the Indian market. The

recognised avenue of commercial profit in those days was monopoly and all the trading nations of the west were frantically trying to secure the exclusive right of trading with India. Portugal based her claims on a Papal award, the English and the Dutch their fictitious rights from the sanction of their respective governments and so did the French though the sanctioning authorities could not claim sovereignty over India or the islands of the Far East. Commercial rivalry was under the circumstances bound to lead to armed conflict and it was wise of Colbert to get ready for the inevitable. There was nothing inherently impracticable in his ambitious scheme though it embraced such distant regions as Madagascar, India, Ceylon and the islands of the Malay Archipelago. The existing order in the Deccan was fast disintegrating and caught unawares the Dutch might have been completely eliminated from the Indian waters but avoidable delay caused loss of precious time and put the Dutch wise about the French designs. Defection and death thinned the fighting forces and dissension among the Directors hampered concerted action and starved the fleet of the sinews of war. Indecision and indiscretion rendered military skill and individual enterprise futile and the success which seemed to be well within their grasp eluded the French. It is futile to speculate as to what might have happened if the importance of India had been better appreciated at Paris. Accidents can only deflect but cannot permanently determine the course of history.

Mr. Sen has told his story well and I hope he will not fail to exploit the opportunities that peace has once more brought to us.

FIRLAND HALL,
MUSSOORIE,
*8th May*, 1947.

S. N. SEN

# PREFACE

The present book, intended to be the first one of a series on the history of the French in India, covers the earliest period, from the first Eastern ventures to the foundation of Pondicherry. The story of the French in India is undoubtedly an interesting subject of study, and although some excellent books have been written in French it is rather unfortunate that the subject has not received the attention of historians in India to the extent it deserves. The object of the proposed series is to help to some extent in filling up this gap in our historical studies.

The first volume deals with the earliest Eastern ventures of the French, the martime and commercial policy of Colbert, the foundation of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, the establishment of the French at Surat and at other subsidiary settlements, the extension of French trade and commerce, the despatch of a formidable naval expedition under de la Haye, the failure of the first serious attempt of the French to obtain a firm foot-hold in the East, and the subsequent foundation of Pondicherry, destined to become the capital of French India and to play an important role in the history of India in the 18th century.

The story of the French naval expedition under de la Haye has been narrated in some details, which may appear at first to be rather unnecessary. It has seemed to me, however, that the historical importance of this naval expedition, as the first serious attempt of the French to obtain a firm foot-hold in the East, deserves much more careful notice than it has so far received. The political ambition of Dupleix and the military

exploits of the sons of France in India about the middle of the 18th century have almost completely overshadowed all previous attempts. But it is nonetheless true that in the reign of Louis XIV, under the far-sighted and vigorous statesmanship of Colbert, France did make a serious attempt to create a commercial and political sphere of influence in the East. It was the most opportune moment for France. She had, during the first part of the reign, gained an ascendancy in Europe unchallenged by any of her neighbours. Her economic and commercial development had brought her to the front rank of European maritime Powers. As long as peace lasted in Europe and she had a free hand, she could legitimately aspire to a share in the Eastern trade and colonisation. It is not at all improbable that she might have been successful in beating down the rivalry of the Dutch and in creating a wide sphere of commercial and political influence in the East but for the outbreak of war in Europe, which diverted her attention and prevented her from following up her Eastern policy. The prolonged siege of St. Thomé, which revealed the startling weakness of an important Indian Power, might have led to the adoption by France under Louis XIV of the policy of Dupleix, and that with possibly greater success, long before the birth of that statesman. It was only the war in Europe, keeping France occupied for more than a quarter of a century, that upset all her Eastern projects. If the importance of a subject depends not merely upon the success achieved but also upon its possibilities, the importance of the French naval expedition under de la Haye can hardly be minimised. It had enormous possibilities before it, and if rightly conducted it might have led to the firm establishment of the French in the East.

Among the original sources consulted two deserve special mention, as being the ones I have drawn upon to a very large extent, first, Abbé Carré's *Le Courier de l'Orient* (in manuscript), and second, the *Mémoires* of Francois Martin (edited by Martineau). They are of great value and importance and can be relied upon as giving a detailed and trustworthy account of the events of the period under review. It is true that there are some exaggerations and mis-statements (probably not deliberate, but due to oversight or wrong information), but on the whole they are quite dependable, as far as contemporary evidence can be. Moreover, though it is not unlikely that Abbé Carré and Martin met at St. Thomé or at Madras on a few occasions, they wrote their diaries quite independently and uninfluenced by each other. That is very important for our purpose, as giving us an opportunity to check up one with the help of the other. About the two sources themselves, Abbé Carré's manuscript gives a detailed account of the early period of the establishment of the French in India and particularly of the French naval expedition under de la Haye, from the time of the departure of the squadron from France to the middle of the second siege of St. Thomé, when Abbé Carré left Madras to return to Europe. The original manuscript is preserved in the India Office Library, London, and I made use of a rotograph copy in the Calcutta University Library. Abbé Carré's style is in many places rather elaborate and cumbrous, and his sentimental effusions have sometimes led him to exaggerations. The *Mémoires* of Francois Martin, on the other hand, presents a striking contrast. The language is as simple and direct as can possibly be, and the account reveals a keen insight into men and affairs on the part

of the author. There is no more detailed and truthful account of the history of the French in India in the second half of the 17th century than the *Mémoires* of Francois Martin. It is rather unfortunate that the diary stops short in the middle and is not brought down to the last days of the author.

Besides these two sources, I have made use of a number of other contemporary documents and later works, both French and English, a list of which will be found in the Bibliography at the end. I have been careful to acknowledge debts as far as possible, but if at times I have omitted it through oversight, I crave the pardon of my readers. To some authorities my indebtedness has been of such a general nature that it is difficult to acknowledge it in foot-notes, which is possible only in specific cases.

I should state here that because of war exigencies it was not possible for me to consult the different Archives of Paris which contain valuable documents about the period covered in this book. However, these documents have been so thoroughly examined and so extensively made use of by Kaeppelin in his *La Compagnie des Indes Orientales* that it would have served little practical purpose to have gone through them once again. On the other hand, I have consulted some other sources, like Abbé Carré's *Le Courier de l'Orient*, Records of Fort St. George etc., which have not been noticed by Kaeppelin. It should be observed that the general plan of the present book is somewhat different from that of Kaeppelin's, where more attention has been paid to the Company's organisation in France and its trading and commercial operations rather than to the political and military activities of the French in India. That does not, however, detract from the merit of Kaeppelin's

book which is undoubtedly the most outstanding work about the early period of the history of the French in India.

Before I conclude, I should like to express my sense of indebtedness to Dr. Surendranath Sen, M.A., Ph.D., B.Litt. (Oxon), Director of Archives, Government of India, and to Dr. Indubhushan Banerji, M.A., Ph.D., Head of the Department of History, Calcutta University, who have helped me immeasurably with their valuable suggestions and general guidance.

I also take this opportunity to record here my sincere gratitude to Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee, M.L.A., M.A., B.L., D.Litt., LL.D., Barrister-at-Law, President of the Council of Post-Graduate Teaching in Arts, Calcutta University, but for whose kind encouragement it would have been extremely difficult for me to bring out the present volume.

My thanks are also due to my esteemed friend and colleague, Dr. Pratul Chandra Gupta, M.A., Ph.D. (Lond.), Lecturer in History, Calcutta University, to whom I am specially indebted for his many valuable suggestions and for having very kindly helped me in seeing the book through the press.

Lastly, I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my sincere thanks to the Superintendent of the University Press, Mr. N. C. Sen, and his assistants for their unfailing courtesy and ready help and co-operation.

CALCUTTA.
*July, 1947.*

S. P. SEN.

# CHAPTER I

## The Establishment of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales

1. Little-known history of the French in India. 2. Early Eastern ventures of the French. 3. Colbert's economic and maritime policy. 4. Foundation of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales. 5. Finances of the Company. 6. Constitution, powers and privileges of the Company. 7. Madagascar enterprise. 8. Preparatory work for the establishment of the Company in the East. 9 Caron at Surat. 10. Development of French trade and commerce in the East.

### 1. *Little-known History of the French in India*

In the history of the relations between the East and the West in modern times a very important part was played by the three great trading Companies of the East Indies, the Dutch, the English and the French. They practically moulded the later history of Asia, with its inevitable reaction on the history of Europe and of the World, and a study of their history is therefore both interesting and instructive. But while much has been studied and written about the Dutch and the English Companies the history of the French Company has been rather neglected. This is in spite of the fact, that, although the French came last upon the scene, their national genius " asserted itself in a manner that speedily brought them on a level with the most securely planted of their European rivals." Not only that, " the ambition that had urged her most famous monarch to dream of universal dominion in the West, began before very long to form plans for the attainment of a French Empire in the East. He was a French

statesman who first dared to aspire to subordinate the vast Empire of the Mughal to a European will. He was a French statesman who first conceived the idea of conquering India by the aid of Indians. They were French soldiers who demonstrated on the field of battle the superiority of a handful of disciplined Europeans to the uncontrolled hordes of Asia."[1] The story of the exploits of the French in India reads almost like a romance. " Yet in no romance that was ever penned did any of the characters dare to entertain such widespread and deep laid schemes as were cherished by many of the actors in this real scene. And yet it is another peculiartiy of this eventful history that the actors in it did not only dare to conceive, but they brought their vast plans to the very brink of success."[2] It is surprising that such a romantic story is so little known. Most of it is steeped in the darkness of oblivion, and only from time to time do a few names flash out and capture our imagination by their individual brilliance, De la Haye, Dupleix, La Bourdonnais, Lally and Bussy.

For the comparative neglect which the study of the history of the French in India has generally received, there are three principal reasons. First, because of the continuity in the organisations and colonial possessions of the Dutch and English Companies there is a unity throughout their history, whereas the history of the French Company is a " *chaine composée de plusieurs anneaux* " (chain composed of several links).[3] There were six different Companies formed from time to time, the Company constituted by the Letters-Patent

1 Malleson—History of the French in India, pp. 1-2.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
3 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes, Avant Propos.*

of Henry IV in 1604, *La Compagnie des Moluques* (1615), *La Compagnie d'Orient* (1642), *La Compagnie des Indes Orientales* formed by Colbert in 1664, *La Compagnie des Indes* formed by Law in 1719, and another Company of the same name formed by Calonne in 1785. Although the different French Companies should really be considered as mere successive phases in the evolution of the same body, still from the very nature of things there cannot be claimed the same continuity as in the case of the Dutch and English Companies. Secondly, the loss of most of her possessions in the East naturally made people indifferent about the history of the French Company. Thirdly, the French Company was closely associated with the State, and with the disappearance of the *Ancien Régime* there disappeared also the records and archives of the Company. In the general detestation of everything connected with the Old State the Company also fell a victim, and the French people had no desire to resuscitate the story of an organisation which had flourished under Royal patronage. The gulf created by the French Revolution between those early times and the present was wide indeed. "The military history of modern France begins with the wars of 1792; . . . however much France may regret that the great Eastern prize did not fall into her hands, she cares little for the details of a struggle which occurred before the period at which she conquered the great nations of the Continent and constituted herself, for a time, mistress and arbitress of the greater part of Europe."[1] It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the creation of a second Eastern empire for

1 Malleson—History of the French in India, p. 5.

France, that there was a revival of curiosity to study the history of the French Company, the exploits of the sons of France in the East in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the glorious success which they had almost achieved.

## 2. *Early Eastern Ventures of the French*

Of the four great European nations who built up trade relations with the East, the Portugese, the Dutch, the English and the French, the French came last upon the scene. It does not mean however that French interest in the Eastern trade was not roused earlier. As a matter of fact, the fabled wealth of the East had captured the imagination of all the maritime peoples in Europe, and in common with the adventurous spirits of other lands French sailors and merchants had set out as early as the first quarter of the sixteenth century on what were regarded at the time as long and perilous voyages but with enormous possibilities. We are not here concerned with the details of those distant voyages which are for the most part lost to us. Suffice it to know that they were all spasmodic and not sustained, the efforts of a few seafaring people lured by the stories of the East without any help or recognition from the State. It is true that in the reigns of Francis I and Henry III edicts were issued exhorting the people to undertake long voyages,[1] but her own difficulties and Continental entanglements prevented France from putting forth any sustained and organised efforts. It was not till the reign of Henry IV, when France had set her own

[1] Malleson—History of the French in India, p. 5.

house in order, that she could think of making organised efforts about distant voyages and perilous undertakings. It was only at the beginning of the seventeenth century that regular Companies were formed under Royal patronage and with the recognition of the State. Henry IV was a far-sighted ruler and realised the value of foreign trade and colonisation. He looked both to the East and to the West. In 1598 he confirmed a privilege, conferred by Henry III but so long having no effect, to the Marquis de la Roche and gave him the mission "*d'etablir des colons et de porter la religion Catholique ès pays de Canada et autres*"[1] (to establish colonies in and to carry the Catholic faith to Canada and other countries). In 1603 a similar privilege was conferred on sieur de Monts to found a colony in Acadia. In 1601 a Company called "*La Compagnie des mers Orientales*" formed at St. Malo sent two ships to India but met with little success. Soon, however, another Company was formed for the same purpose mainly through the efforts of the financier Antoine Godefrey and a Flemish navigator, Gerard de Roy (or le Roy?). It obtained the support of Henry IV who gave it Letters Patent dated 1st June, 1604, granting an exclusive monopoly of trade in the East for fifteen years. But disputes among the proprietors, lack of funds and the violent opposition of the Dutch prevented the execution of the project. A reconstituted Company was formed in 1615, known as "*La Compagnie des Moluques*", to which Louis XIII granted Letters Patent dated 2nd July, 1615, transferring to it the privileges conferred on the old Company. But for the most part the reign of Louis XIII

1 Levasseur—Preface to Weber's *La Compagnie Francaise des Indes.*

did not see any development in distant maritime ventures, mainly because times of political trouble are not favourable to great enterprises of that kind. It was only towards the end of the reign when Richelieu had succeeded in making the authority of his master supreme in France and had set France on the road to ascendancy in Europe that distant maritime enterprises again received the attention of the State.

Richelieu understood well how much necessary it was for the greatness of France to have a strong navy and a well extended trade. He thought of making France the mistress of the seas and having seen the wonderful success of the Dutch Company he wanted France to rival it, and in imitation to "*faire des grandes compagnies, obliger les marchands d'y entrer, parce que les petits marchands n'ont pas les reins assez forts avec leur petits vaisssseaux mal équipés qui deviennent la proie des pirates*"[1] (to create great companies and to compel the merchants to enter therein, because the small merchants are not sufficiently strong with their small and badly equipped boats which would fall a prey to pirates). So he early interested himself in the creation of a number of Companies, "*La Compagnie du Morbihan*," "*La Compagnie Normande*," "*La Compagnie des Îles d'Amerique*" and about ten others of the same kind. The last in date was "*La Compagnie d'Orient*" founded in 1642, which was entrusted with the establishment of colonies in Madagascar and taking possession of the island in the name of the king. Letters Patent dated the 24th June, 1642, issued to the new Company granted it exclusive pri-

[1] Quoted by Levasseur in the Preface to Weber's *La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*.

vileges for twenty years. It was the first Company of colonisation in the Indian Ocean, and Fort Dauphin was its work. We need not go into the details of the history of this establishment or of the somewhat ambiguous relations between the Company and Duc de la Meilleraye. The choice of colonising Madagascar seems to have been dictated by a sound and farseeing policy, as it was an ideal resting place midway between Europe and the East. But instead of regarding it merely as a midway resting station, the French made the mistake of thinking that they would be able to draw great advantages and large profits from the island itself. After the first attempt which met with little success, all desire for a renewal of the effort languished in France as the country again fell into the vortex of internal difficulties and foreign complications. It was not again till the rise of Colbert that the project for building up an Eastern trade for France was revived.

Down to the time of Colbert French efforts in colonial and commercial matters were intermittent and the results not very encouraging. The political preoccupations of the time, the ever recurring civil wars and foreign entanglements undid all the work done in that direction both by the State and private persons in the intervals of peace and quiet. Colbert was the first to be able to follow during a long ministry a firm and consistent policy regarding maritime enterprises. Among other reasons for the failure of the early attempts of the French may be mentioned, first, "the effect of that lightheartedness for which the other nations reproach them because of their inability to persist in an enterprise when the beginning is not followed by a happy success;"[1] second, lack of funds,

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, p. 3.

and third, want of sufficient protection by the State against the jealousy and violence of other European commercial rivals. The result was, that even the adventurous spirits of the maritime districts became damped and Frenchmen came to think that long distance voyages were not meant for them.

### 3. *Colbert's Economic and Maritime Policy*

The reign of Louis XIV marked a new era for France, an era of greatness and prosperity. Among the famous ministers who, more than the king himself, were responsible for the achievements of the reign history has given the first place to Colbert, the most precious legacy of Cardinal Mazarin to the young king and to the nation. Colbert came to power in 1661 with a line of policy already determined and with a clear cut programme of reforms which he had drawn up long before. As early as 1653 he expressed his ideas in the following terms in a memoir to his master: "It is necessary to re-establish or create all the industries, even those of luxury, to establish a protective tariff system, to organise producers and merchants in corporations, to lighten the fiscal shackles injurious to the people, to restore to France the maritime transport of her products, to develop the colonies and to attach them commercially to France, to suppress all the intermediaries between France and India, (and) to develop the navy in order to protect the merchant fleet."[1] The above extract gives a very brief résumé of the entire work of Colbert, which in effect forms a complete whole with the different parts well balanced and regulated.

[1] Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 100.

It is true that the different parts were not all equally good, but the thing is to be studied as a whole, and the merit of the whole, it must be admitted, overshadowed the defects of any single part. Moreover, it should also be remembered that very often the exaggerations of Colbert's "System" were the work of his successors, who claimed to carry on his policy without understanding either its spirit or its mechanism.

According to the orthodox economic definition Colbert belonged to the Mercantilist school, the basic principle of which was that wealth consisted only in precious metals and that the accumulation of national wealth depended on encouraging the inflow of precious metals and prohibiting their export. This could only be done by developing national trade and industries, by encouraging the export of national products and by discouraging imports from outside. These principles were known and accepted long before the time of Colbert, and measures for the institution of protective tariffs and the development of national commerce and industries had been taken in the reigns of Louis XI, Louis XII, Francis I and Henry IV. But these efforts had been intermittent and not pursued on any consistent and logical lines. Colbert was the first to give a definite direction to these attempts and to make a reasoned and systematic application of the old principles. He was in a sense therefore the founder of that system which remained the model for the economic policy of France for nearly two centuries and which has preserved in history the name of that great statesman in the expression "Colbertism."

"The basis of Colbertism was the theory of balance of commerce, the last and the most perfect expression of the mercantile doctrine, of which the guiding idea

was to obtain a total of the sale of national products outside greater in value than the sum of the purchases made outside for the nourishment of the national market."[1] It was believed that this policy would lead to the flow of precious metals into the country and would thereby increase national wealth. It did not strike anybody in the seventeenth century that national wealth did not consist only in precious metals and that it was not the balance of trade which counted but the balance of exchange which included both visible and invisible exports and imports.

The economic structure reared by Colbert was divided into six parts, the growth of industries, the development of foreign trade and commerce, the organisation of some big Companies, the foundation and economic exploitation of overseas colonies, the creation of a strong mercantile fleet, and last, the strengthening of the French navy to protect the merchant fleet. These different parts however did not stand separate but were all interconnected and dependent on the central idea of Colbertism, namely to have a favourable balance of commerce. The results of this economic system steadily and diligently pursued were nothing short of a wonder. Encouraged by monopolies, privileges and other state favours and guided by strict and detailed regulations, French manufactures multiplied rapidly and reached a perfection which could easily outdo foreign products and capture foreign markets for the benefit of a favourable balance of commerce, the central idea of Colbertism. Colbert realised that mere growth of industries would not be enough without a corresponding development of maritime commerce, to which therefore

1 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 102.

he gave a very careful attention. For the growth of foreign trade and commerce it was necessary to have some strong and well organised Companies invested with exclusive trading privileges and capable of taking full charge of the entire foreign trade of France. The utility of the system of great Companies invested with commercial monopolies has often been criticised. But in judging the economic institutions of the past, a writer who regards as infallible and universal the principles of the present time has no historic sense. The duration of voyages, the knowledge of markets, the security of the seas were quite different in those days, and it was necessary for a statesman of the seventeenth century to act according to the circumstances of his time. There were undoubtedly at the time merchants who protested against the monopoly Companies. But statesmen like Richelieu and Colbert thought that in their time only a powerful Company was capable of collecting the necessary capital and of defending the national flag and commerce in distant countries like India and China. As a matter of fact, we can now see that the cardinal defect of the successive French East India Companies was that they were not sufficiently strong. Colbert's plan in this direction was to create a group of powerful Companies after the example of the Dutch. Strictly watched and protected by the Government, invested with a close monopoly and other important privileges, these Companies were to share among themselves the commercial relations between France and the distant lands of the world. For the growth of French trade and commerce it was necessary to have overseas colonies, peopled by emigrants from France, and included in the monopoly of the great Companies which would have the exclusive charge of maintaining

them in relation to the mother country. The overseas colonisation would serve, from the economic point of view, two purposes. First, it would expand the market for French products, and second, it would secure for France the necessary raw materials for her indutsries which could not be grown on the European soil. The colonies would be absolutely closed to any direct foreign trade, and following the currently accepted colonial policy in Europe, Colbert's aim was to direct his economic system solely for the joint interests of France and her colonies. The policy of colonisation led on inevitably to the development of the merchant fleet. It was of the greatest importance that the transport of goods between France and her colonies should not be allowed to fall into the hands of foreigners like the Dutch and the English. The carrying trade was of great value and importance, and in order to secure it for France it was necessary to create a strong merchant fleet. The creation of a large merchant fleet led on to the last item of Colbert's system, the strengthening of the French navy, absolutely necessary for the protection of the merchant fleet in the distant seas of the world. Even apart from its political importance which was great indeed, the navy was important for commercial purposes as well. Taking his inspiration from Richelieu Colbert gave personal attention to the minutest details in the reconstitution and strengthening of the French navy. The result of his indefatigable labours was that in place of a few old ships rotting in the ports at the time of his coming into power, he left at the time of his death a fleet of nearly three hundred ships of all kinds.[1] The creation of Rochefort and the reconsti-

[1] Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 104.

tution of Brest and Toulon were entirely the work of Colbert.

The different parts in the economic and maritime policy of Colbert formed but parts of one homogeneous system. All the diverse elements were drawn together to one common centre, in conformity with the policy of strict centralisation which Colbert had inherited from his predecessors, Richelieu and Mazarin. The system was undoubtedly calculated to promote the economic prosperity of France, but two important charges had been brought against it by its critics, first, the imposition of severe restrictions by the State which killed private initiative, and second, the importation of certain articles from the East which competed with home products. Let us take the first point first. It is true that Colbert's system had imprisoned national industry and commerce by strict regulations, monopolies and privileges, but it had an ultimate object which is frequently overlooked. All these regulations, monopolies and privileges were a necessary preparatory school through which France must pass in order to acquire that commercial and industrial education in which she had been completely lacking till then. That was the surest way for France to regain rapidly the time she had lost to the two great industrial and commercial nations of the century, the Dutch and the English; and following that way she might one day attain to superiority over them. When that would happen, when the new education casting deeper roots into the soil would provide the country with a large enterprising business and manufacturing class, when capital would lose its old shyness and come forward to help any enterprise calculated to increase the economic prosperity of the country, all the old restrictions, monopolies and privileges would be

abolished, and to private initiative would be left the task of maintaining France in the first rank of European commercial powers.[1] That was the spirit of Colbertism, and for the fact that the ultimate object was not realised critics should blame not the author of the system but his unimaginative successors who claimed to carry on his work without understanding his policy. The spirit of Colbertism is reflected to-day in the modern economic theory of "protection of infant national industries" and finds in it an economic justification.

The second grave accusation raised against Colbert's system is that while on the one hand he expressed a great zeal for the encouragement of some industries at home, *e.g.*, drapery, silk and luxury clothing materials, he opened the gates full wide for the importation of similar goods into France from the East. One may defend Colbert on the ground that this sacrifice of national interests was a necessary price that France had to pay for the establishment of commercial relations with the East and for procuring certain important raw materials for her industries. Moreover, some Eastern luxuries had come into so much use in the country that there was no means of excluding them altogether. When that was so, it was better that France should get these articles at first hand and not through intermediaries like the Dutch or the English. No doubt there was some illogicality in the system, but under the circumstances it was inevitable.

We have seen that the constitution of some large Companies formed an important part of Colbert's system. The most important of these Companies were "*La Com-*

[1] Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 106.

*pagnie des Indes Orientales* " with a trading monopoly in the Indian ocean and in the Pacific, extending from the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Horn, and " *La Compagnie des Indes Occidentales* " with a trading monopoly in America and on the west coast of Africa. The second never became as important as the first, since the circumstances in the territories left to its charge were entirely different. It lasted for ten years only, and after this short experiment Colbert found out the unsuitability of the Company to develop the American colonies. The Company of the East Indies lasted much longer and was the object of constant cares and solicitude on the part of the great minister.

## 4. *Foundation of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales*

We have been dragged into some generalisations beyond the subject of our main interest, namely a study of the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, but it is necessary to see exactly what position this particular institution held in the system of Colbert as a whole and the interrelations of the different parts of that system.

It has sometimes been disputed as to who took the intiative in the formation of the Company of the East Indies,—the king, Colbert or private persons. Colbert certainly had the greatest part in it, which is made indisputable by his voluminous correspondence. Louis XIV also took a deep interest. Another person to be given some credit is Louis Berryer, the Secretary of the " *Conseils Royaux*," who was specially entrusted by Colbert to assist in the birth of the Company. Private persons played only a passive part.

François Martin gives a curious story about the origin of the French Company. A group of private

French merchants had purchased a ship at Amsterdam to trade with Australia and to carry the Christian faith there, but the jealousy of the Dutch led to the detention of the ship for a long time in the port, and when at last she was set free, she was overwhelmed by a furious gale and sank in the Texel.[1] The interested persons were naturally irritated and attributed the loss of their ship entirely to the jealousy of the Dutch. They applied to Louis XIV for justice and secured in their favour the support of Colbert who gave to their work an amplitude which these merchants had not even probably dreamt of. It was eagerly seized upon by Colbert as a good opportunity for putting into operation his long planned project. At first he kept himself behind the screen and left the nominal initiative in the hands of the private merchants, but he secretly gave them every encouragement and led them to take up with enthusiasm a scheme immensely vaster than what they had thought of at first. Although he carefully maintained a superficial aloofness, in the development of the scheme and in its materialisation the active hand of Colbert is clear enough.

The private merchants, nine in number, were intelligent enough to take the hint from Colbert, and the latter was fortunate to have found a number of collaborators who understood his policy. But still it was necessary to educate public opinion, as successive failures in the past had discredited all attempts to establish direct commercial relations with the East. The general public was quite cold to any scheme on the old lines, and for the success of the new enterprise it was necessary to create new circumstances more favour-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, p. 5.

able than in the past, particularly through Royal patronage and Governmental aid and protection. In order to educate public opinion Colbert had recourse to the Academician, François Charpentier, whose book, " *Discours d'un fidèle sujet du Roi touchant l'etablissement d'une Compagnie Française pour le commerce des Indes Orientales, addressé a tous les Français* " was published in April, 1664, at the king's expense. In this book Charpentier after discussing how much the greatness of a country depended on her economic prosperity, went on to describe the immense importance of the Eastern trade and the examples of the Dutch and the English who were enriching their countries beyond measure by this means. He enumerated the advantages that would accrue to France from the possession and colonisation of the island of Madagascar, and then in a fit of ecstasy he asked " Are we lacking in courage and skill to imitate the Dutch? We are lacking in neither and we have the best seamen . . . ." [1] Finally he described the different ways in which the protection of the king might be secured. The king could be begged to contribute one tenth of the capital (which was estimated at six millions) and to grant to the Company half the customs duties on the articles exported and imported. He could further be solicited to bear all the losses suffered by the Company during the first eight or ten years.

At the same time that Charpentier was trying to impress upon the public the importance and the advantages of the new enterprise, the original nine merchants were labouring hard to give a definite shape and form to the scheme. In the course of some private meetings held at the residences of some of them, statutes

1 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 115.

were drawn up for the formation of the Company. Colbert was not content merely by giving them general advice and guidance, but he also gave them an accredited representative in the person of Louis Berryer, whose contribution in the actual formation of the Company was certainly one of the greatest. In drawing up statutes for the new Company, the organisers found ample precedents not only in the English and Dutch Companies but also in the earlier French ones. At last when the general framework had been sketched, a number of public meetings were held, at the last of which, held on the 26th May, 1664, Articles were finally drawn up to be submitted for the approval of the king. On the 31st May the organisers went in deputation to the king at Fontainebleau, to whom they were presented by Colbert himself. The king gave them a patient hearing and a favourable reply, and indicated some modifications to the articles, written by his own hand on the margin. A new public assembly was called on the 5th June, attended by more than three hundred persons, where the articles were read out together with the suggestions of the king. This manifest royal interest had the effect of producing many immediate adherents. The organisers proceeded forthwith to the election of twelve Syndics according to the desire of the king, who were charged with conducting the affairs of the Company till the election of the Directors-General. There was an initial difficulty in the way of the new Company in that the old Company, "*La Compagnie d'Orient*," was still in possession of exclusive privileges in the East. But the difficulty was removed by the intervention of the king, to whose expressed will the old Company submitted. The shareholders of the old Company transferred their rights to the Syndics of the

new Company in exchange for shares worth 20,000 livres.

There remained only one thing more, a solemn Royal Declaration putting the scheme on a legal basis, which was issued in August, 1664. In a long preamble were set forth the objects of the policy of encouraging foreign trade and commerce. "The happiness of the people consists not merely in the considerable reduction of taxes which we have granted them since two or three years back, but much more in the re-establishment of the commerce of our kingdom, only by which can plenty be attracted within (the country) and can be spread over the generality of the people through manufactures, consumption of goods and the employment of a large number of people which commerce would bring about . . . . ; we are principally attached to the commerce from long distance voyages, being assured by ordinary and natural reasoning and by the experience of our neighbours that the profit exceeds infinitely the trouble and labour which one takes in exploring distant lands. . . . That is what has obliged us to employ all our cares for the establishment of a powerful Company to trade with the East Indies." [1] Then followed the promulgation of the constitution of the Company, divided into forty-eight articles which practically reproduced the articles presented to the king in May with only a few modifications. It was duly registered by the '*Parlement de Paris*', the '*Cour des Comptes*' and the '*Cour des Aides*' according to the special competence of each over the different parts.

The Company had been formed and it had received its solemn consecration by the king. But the most im-

1 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 121.

portant thing yet remained to be done, and that was to raise money. Here Colbert was compelled to come out into the open, as he realised that without his direct intervention the necessary funds could never be raised. He knew the effects of successive failures in the past on the public mind, the lack of initiative of the '*bourgeoisie*' and the '*petite noblesse de robe*,' and the shyness of French capital for enterprises frought with risks. He had therefore to exert the entire influence of the state almost openly in order to raise funds for the Company, and the supposed principle of voluntary contributions often gave way in practice to forced loans. But it would be unfair to the great minister if we condemn him severely for his action, since what he did, he did entirely for the general interest and for the economic prosperity of the nation as a whole.

The Royal family was put first on the list. The king agreed to pay three million livres to the Company, but it was really a sort of loan repayable at the end of ten years and therefore exclusive of what might strictly be called the capital of the Company. The Queen, the Queen-mother, the Dauphin and all the great nobles were induced to subscribe, and their example was followed by lesser people also who regarded it as a suitable way of paying their court to the king. The subscription from the court reached a total of two million livres.[1] At the same time an appeal was made to the public and a country-wide agitation was started. On the 13th June, 1664 a "*lettre de cachet*" was circulated to the Mayors of the principal towns of the kingdom, requiring them to call public meetings, to declare the keen personal interest that the king himself

[1] Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 123.

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was taking in the scheme, and to collect subscriptions on the spot. Colbert took the liveliest interest in this campaign, and he enjoined upon the Intendants and other Royal officials to exert themselves to the utmost for raising funds. His voluminous correspondence is the greatest proof of his activity. "You cannot better show your zeal for his Majesty," wrote he to the Mayor of Bayonne, "than by continuing your application in increasing always the most that you can the number of shareholders for the said commerce and in making them pay promptly the first two thirds of the sums for which they have declared themselves."[1] But in spite of all official pressure and baits of official rewards, the public did not respond to the appeal as expected. The letters to Colbert from his agents show that the response from the maritime districts was poor, and that from the inland districts even poorer. But still thanks to the direct Governmental intervention, a portion of the total capital was raised. Charpentier gives a list of collections in his "*Relation de l'etablissement de la Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales etc.*"

### 5. *Finances of the Company*

It would be profitable to go into some details about the financial condition of the Company, as it certainly formed the most important factor on which depended the success or failure of the enterprise. The capital of the Company was not fixed in any formal manner by the Constitution. Charpentier in his "*Discours d'un fidèle sujet du Roi*" estimated that a

1 Clement—*Lettres, instructions et memoires de Colbert*, Vol. II, p. 428. (Letter dated the 17th July, 1664.)

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sum of six to seven million livres would be required to finance the Company, but soon it appeared that this amount was much too insufficient. In the Articles presented to the king there was no mention of any definite amount as the capital; there was only a prayer that the king should contribute a sum equal to a fifth of the capital (Art. XXXII). The king practically decided the matter by writing on the margin "up to the sum of three million livres," which in effect fixed the capital at fifteen millions. It was reproduced in the same terms in the Declaration of August.[1] It was in fact a very considerable amount, and neither the English nor the Dutch Company had started with so much capital.

The capital was divided into fifteen thousand shares of one thousand livres each, and it was expressly declared that the total amount could not be reduced by the withdrawal of any shareholder. The Company was strictly forbidden to make any refund to any shareholder, and a shareholder could not get out of his liabilities except by transferring his share to somebody else. These rigid precautions were, under the circumstances, quite necessary, since there was a real risk that as soon as the first enthusiasm of the public died down a large number of the shareholders might like to withdraw from further financial liabilities. The subscription was opened soon after the ratification of the Articles by the king at the beginning of May, 1664. Payment was to be made in three equal instalments, the first to be paid at once, the second by December, 1665, and the third by December, 1666, by which

1 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, pp. 264-65

date the capital would be fully called up.[1] But in fact, collections fell far short of expectation.

The king's contribution which was really in the nature of a subvention from the state was to amount to three million livres, one-fifth of the capital of the Company. It was not to be paid all at a time. At the beginning only 300,000 livres would be paid, and then every time the total of the sums raised from private persons reached 400,000 livres, the king would pay a further instalment of 300,000 livres. So that the king's contribution would have been paid up in full as soon as the Company had raised 3,600,000 livres from private persons, *i.e.*, by the end of the year 1664, since subscribers had to pay up one-third of the capital at once. The king's contribution was over and above what really constituted the capital of the Company. It was not part of the capital but was only a loan, and a loan without any interest. It was to be repaid by the Company at the end of ten years. As a matter of fact, not only was it not repaid, but a fresh loan had to be advanced by the king to save the Company from a complete financial bankruptcy. The most remarkable point about the loan was that all the losses suffered by the Company during the first ten years were to be deducted from it, and only the balance was to be repaid (Art. XLV of the Declaration).[2]

In spite of Governmental inducement and pressure and the example of promptness set by the king, raising capital seemed to be a very difficult and slow work. At the beginning of 1665, in place of the expected eight million livres (five from the public and three from the king), the Company had collected only 3,600,000 livres.

1 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 266.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 268.

The total subscribed, in fact, reached a much higher figure, but the actual amount paid was quite unsatisfactory. With the small resources at its disposal the Company had to undertake big and expensive enterprises, the building of a large number of merchant vessels, the construction of a port and an arsenal at Lorient and the preparation of the first few voyages to the East. The first instalment paid by the shareholders totalled 2,468,396 livres, the second 704,333, the third 24,000, and the king's contribution according to the terms of the engagement stood at two million livres in 1667; while during the same period the Company sent out four fleets at a tremendous expense but with hopelessly small results. The Company petitioned the king on the 19th February, 1667 for protection, and sent a memorandum to Colbert on the 9th July (1667) about its deplorable financial condition. Colbert fully realised the gravity of the situation and the necessity of using further Governmental pressure.

By an arrêt dated the 21st September, 1668, the shareholders who had not even paid the first third of their shares were called upon to pay it up within a month. The second instalment was to be paid by the 15th November, 1668, and the third by the 15th January, 1669.[1] But even this direct Governmental intervention did not have the desired effect, and money had to be found by a fresh appeal to the king, to which he consented, for a loan of another two million livres on the same terms as the first. The arrêt of the 21st September, 1668 contained a very dangerous provision. It permitted the shareholders who were late in payment to withdraw completely from the Company by ceding

[1] Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 270.

in full their right over the first instalment paid, in violation of the original constitution which prohibited any diminution of the capital by the withdrawal of any shareholder. Moreover, the direct intervention of the Government alarmed many of the shareholders, and they preferred to lose their first instalment rather than be coerced to pay up the other two instalments. They took advantage of the loop-hole in the arrêt and withdrew from the Company. The result was therefore even worse for the Company. However, one did not give up all hopes, and in 1675 fresh measures were taken to stabilise the finances of the Company, including the abandonment by the king of all claims over the four million livres which he had already lent. We need not go into these details which lie beyond our period.

### 6. *Constitution, Powers and Privileges of the Company*

It has already been seen that the persons who drew up the constitution of the Company had before them not only the examples of other French Companies in the past but also those of the Dutch and English Companies. In the end the Dutch model was preferred, and the French Company instead of being a unitary body like the English Company adopted the federated system of the Dutch Company. In the United Provinces the system had its origin in the existence of separate states with their rival interests and jealous outlook, and some persons have poured ridicule on the French imitation of the Dutch model on the ground that France being a unified country circumstances there were entirely different. But it should be borne in mind that from the point of view of trade and commerce,

France approximated more to the United Provinces than to England. Unlike London Paris was not the only commercial and maritime centre in France. Almost equally important centres were Rouen, Lyon, Nantes, La Rochelle, Saint-Malo, Marseilles, Tours, Caen, Dieppe, Le Havre and Dunkerque. It was therefore necessary in order to avoid commercial jealousy and rivalry to have separate provincial branches with only a central organisation in Paris.

According to the constitution the Directors both of the central and of the local chambers were to remain in office for seven years, to be replaced every year by fresh elections of two in Paris and one elsewhere. Besides the Directors there were to be in each chamber a Treasurer, a Secretary and a Book-Keeper to be elected by the shareholders who could dismiss them also. Directors and superior servants were to be elected by shareholders having six shares at least. To be eligible for these posts one must have twenty shares in Paris and ten in the provinces. A general meeting was to be held once a year of all the shareholders admitted to the electorate to deliberate about important affairs and to elect the Directors-General in Paris.

The local chambers enjoyed a good deal of autonomy. They could make purchases and sales, equip ships, enrol crews, pay the wages of their own employees and decide about all expenses (Art. XX of the Declaration). The control of the central chamber over them was however assured by the sending of their accounts half-yearly to Paris where they were verified and checked (Art. XIX of the Decl.).[1] The Directors in each chamber were divided into three Departments

[1] Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 195.

or Colleges. The first was to look after books, registers and proceedings of meetings, the second was in charge of the construction and equipment of ships, and the third was entrusted with the purchase and sale of merchandise. It was expressly stipulated that neither any shareholder nor any Director would have to pay any money in addition to what he had engaged himself to pay (Art. II of the Decl.). But very often this provision was violated through Governmental intervention in the interests of the Company's finances. In order to encourage investment by foreigners the Government also promised not to seize their shares even in times of war (Art. IV of the Decl.).

The Royal Declaration conferred on the Company the perpetual propriety of the island of Madagascar and its dependencies, and all the lands, places and islands which might be occupied or conquered. The Company was to appoint a Governor-General for its colonial possessions, who would also bear the title of "Lieutenant-General of the king" in order to have more official dignity in the eyes of other nations. The Company was given full military authority over its sphere of influence including the right to seize enemy ships. It could send and receive ambassadors to deal with Oriental kings, could conclude treaties, make alliances and declare war.[1] It was given full judicial authodity also, on the single condition that its tribunals must follow the customs of Paris.[2] In imitation of the foreign Companies the Governor-General was to be assisted by a council of seven members known as the "*Conseil Souverain.*" The "*Conseil Souverain*"

1 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 201.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

was first set up at Fort Dauphin in Madagascar; later it was transferred to Surat in 1671, and finally to Pondicherry in 1701. The Council was both an administrative and a judicial body. There was to be also a "*Commandant d'armes*" to whom the Governor-General would delegate his military authority. The Company was to appoint Governors for secondary settlements who were also to be assisted by councils, but this provision was never put into effect.[1] The commercial personnel was divided, as in other Companies, into merchants, sub-merchants and clerks. They were to look after the purchase and storage of merchandise and the loading of ships under the direction of the chiefs of settlements. The gradation was not absolute and there was ample scope for promotion on merit.

In spite of the active interest taken by the king and Colbert and of the great financial assistance rendered by the Government, the Company was really intended to be an autonomous body. Its only obligation was to submit to the approval of the king the selection of the superior officers. The first occasion for the direct intervention of the king was in 1675 and that was quite unavoidable on account of the miserable financial condition of the Company.[2]

## 7. *Madagascar Enterprise*

The Company was very prompt in fitting out its first expedition of four ships which sailed from Brest on the 1st March, 1665.[3] The destination chosen was Madagascar. Attempts to colonise Madagascar were

1 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, pp. 207-209.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 211.
3 *Mémoirts de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, p. 6.

still fresh in the public mind, and stories and reports about the great advantages to be drawn from the island were widely current. The first expedition was however intended to be merely exploratory and it was decided to take definite steps after receiving first-hand reports from the persons sent out to that island. We need not go into the details of the experience of these men. Suffice it to say that they soon realised the fictitious nature of the stories current in France about the great possibilities of the island. In France, however, people strongly believed in those stories, and before the reports of the first settlers had reached there the Company sent out another expedition of twelve ships in March, 1666 under M. le Marquis de Mondevergue with the title of "Lieutenant-General of the King in the island of Madagascar and Admiral of the southern seas."[1] There were also sent two of the Company's Directors-General, de Faye and Caron, and a large number of merchants and clerks both French and Dutch for the settlements to be established in the Indies. The Company had an elaborate plan of colonising Madagascar in the same way as America, and had entered into contracts with a number of influential people who engaged themselves to supply artisans, workers and peasants to work at the sugar, indigo and tobacco plantations, for which it was believed there was ample scope in the island. As a matter of fact, all these high hopes were belied by experience, and after carrying on a fruitless struggle for some time against adverse factors the Company ultimately resolved to give up all thoughts of permanently colonising Madagascar and to divert its energies to another quarter.

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, p. 88.

It would not be out of place here to notice very briefly the characters of the chief personages who accompanied the expedition. M. de Mondevergue was a man of great qualities and had a high reputation at the Court. He was sympathetic, large-hearted and easily accessible. He had two great faults however. He was not a disciplinarian and was much too frank in his expressions which ultimately brought about his ruin. De Faye had a first hand knowledge of trade and commerce, and was a very conscientious and honest man. His only failing was that he was not very strong-minded and would often give up his point rather than create bad blood, even when he was convinced that he was in the right. Caron was a man of magisterial appearance, severe in looks, implacable in hatred and extremely vindictive. He could never love anybody but himself, and was incapable of making friendship. There was not a spark of generosity in him, and he had no scruples regarding the methods he adopted to achieve his objects. M. de Mondevergue remarked about him that " he was a great man for small affairs." [1] Sometime later there arrived in Madagascar another important

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, p. 99. Caron played such an important part in the establishment of the French in India that his previous career deserves some notice. Born at Brussels of French Protestant parents, Francois Caron entered the service of the Dutch East India Company very early in life and spent twenty-two years there. An intelligent and determined man, he gradually raised himself from a very humble position (probably he started as a cook on board a Dutch vessel) to the rank of a Director-General of the Dutch Company. He spent a long time in the East and amassed an experience of Eastern affairs unrivalled by anybody. Once he had to suffer a supersession, which his ambitious nature could not tolerate. It was about this time that Colbert was making preparations for establishing the French *Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, and the French Ambassador in Holland, Comte d'Estrades, probably acting on the advice of

figure, an Armenian merchant named Macara (or Marcara). He was a man with a rather disreputable record in Italy where he even spent some time in prison. Escaping from there to Paris he attracted the attention of the authorities of the French Company, who regarded him as a very suitable and competent person for developing French trade and commerce in the East. He was accordingly sent to de Faye and Caron in Madagascar with strong recommendations.

The newly established Council at Fort-Dauphin soon realised the hopelessness of the task it had undertaken. There was nothing much that could be done in Madagascar, and towards the end of 1667 Caron represented to the Council about the necessity of passing on to Surat and establishing trade and commerce there. There was a personal motive behind the scheme also, as Caron wanted to work with a free hand, and he felt sure that if his scheme was accepted, he and not de Faye would be called upon to go to Surat, and it would be he who would have all the credit of establishing the first French settlement in India.[1] His object was achieved, and on the 15th October, 1667, he started for Surat on board the ship "*Le Saint Jean de Baptiste*" accompanied by Macara and a number of mercahnts and clerks.[2] We shall see later what happened at Surat, particularly the quarrel which broke out between

Colbert, exploited Caron's resentment against the Dutch Company and induced him to give up his post. Caron then came to France where he was well received, naturalised as a French citizen and given the rank of a Director of the French Company. Before leaving France for Madagascar Caron submitted a detailed memorandum on the establishment of French settlements in the East which received the approval of Colbert.

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, p. 106.
2 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 79.

Caron and Macara. In the meantime let us notice briefly the work of the French embassy sent to the Persian and Mughal Courts which was intended to pave the way for the establishment of French trade and commerce in the East.

## 8. *Preparatory Work for the Establishment of the Company in the East*

India, which was the main object of the French Company, had aroused the interest of Frenchmen long before the foundation of the Company in 1664. The contact between France and India was established by three classes of people, first missionaries, second travellers, and third traders who had a field already prepared for them by the first two classes. The missionaries created contact with the local population and the native authorities, and the travellers gave their countrymen the benefit of their knowledge about India, about the social, political and economic conditions of the country and about the immense possibilities of developing trade and commerce between India and Europe. But for the exploratory and preparatory work of these two classes it would have been extremely difficult for the traders to achieve the success they did. But unlike the traders who came by the sea route, the first-comers had followed the old caravan trade routes. In 1639 the Capucins established a house at Surat, followed later by other religious Orders also, the Jesuits, the Carmelites and the Dominicans. Then came the turn of travellers like La Boullaye le Gouz, Jean Thevenot, François Bernier, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier and others who wrote detailed accounts of the conditions in India for the benefit of their countrymen.

We have already seen the keen interest taken by Louis XIV and Colbert in the formation of the French Company. In order to pave the way for the trading operations of the Company and to secure commercial rights and privileges in the East, it was decided to send an embassy to the Persian and Mughal Courts. In 1664 soon after the formation of the Company, de Lalain and La Boullaye la Gouz were sent out on this mission as ambassadors of the king of France. They were joined by three representatives sent by the Company, Beber, Mariage and Dupont.[1] The ambassadors were charged with letters from Louis XIV to the king of Persia and the Mughal Emperor. At the Persian Court quarrel broke out between the ambassadors and the representatives sent by the Company about their respective competence and jurisdiction. However, they were well received at the Court where the personal letter of Louis XIV created a good impression. The king of Persia granted them a firman permitting the establishment of the French Company in his kingdom. But as the firman was not as favourable as was expected, it was decided that Beber and La Boullaye la Gouz would pass on to India while the rest would remain in Persia to try to secure a revision of the firman more favourable for the French Company.[2]

Beber and de la Boullaye reached Surat in March, 1666. Thanks to the influence of the Superior of the Capucins, Father Ambroise de Preuilly who had been in India since 1650, the two French agents were well received by the Governor of the town. They announced the coming of seven or eight ships from France, which

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, p. 6; also *Castonnet des Fosses—L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 75.

2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, pp. 204-205.

however did not arrive. From Surat Beber and de la Boullaye went on embassy to the Mughal Court at Agra where they were helped considerably by the influence of a French physician, Jacques de la Palisse.[1] They were very honourably received by Aurangzeb to whom they presented the personal letter of Louis XIV. The Mughal Emperor granted them a firman dated the 11th August, 1666 (29th of the month of Saffar of the 9th year of the reign of Aurangzeb) permitting the establishment of a French settlement at Surat.[2] From Agra Beber returned to Surat while de la Boullaye started on a journey to China. He was never heard of again, and it is most probable that he was killed on the way by some bandits. Beber after returning to Surat proceeded to act on the firman, and being a man of great ability he prepared the ground well for Caron, who arrived there at the beginning of 1668.

## 9. *Caron at Surat*

The beginning of the French factory at Surat was quite successful, and the ship " *Le Saint Jean de Baptiste* " was sent back to Madagascar loaded with a rich cargo of clothing materials, sugar, pepper and indigo. But there was an unfortunate incident, a quarrel between Caron and Macara. Caron was a man of ambition and love of power and could not tolerate

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 77

2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, p. 204, Foot note 2. It is strange that *Castonnet des Fosses* states (p. 77) that Aurangzeb replied that he would wait till the arrival of the expected French squadron before doing anything. A French translation of Aurangzeb's firman is to be found in " *Lettres et Conventions des Gouverneurs de Pondichery avec Differents Princes Hindous*," pp. 1-3.

Macara who was creating a party of his own. Macara charged Caron with having conspired with a Banian agent at Surat called Samson who was a thorough cheat, and unfortunately for Caron a part of the cargo of "*Le St. Jean de Baptiste*" which Samson supplied was found to be of a very bad quality. On the other hand Caron accused Macara of having plotted to poison him in order to be dominant in the settlement. On this charge Macara was condemned and sent back to Madagascar with some of his associates by the ship "*Le St. Jean de Baptiste.*" It is not clear whose conduct was more reproachable, Caron's or Macara's, but the "*Conseil Souverain*" at Fort-Dauphin under the influence of de Faye and M. de Mondevergue decided in favour of Macara, quashed the proceedings of the Court at Surat and acquitted the Armenian.[1] This decision of the "*Conseil Souverain,*" although probably just, was rather unfortunate as it created bad blood between Caron and de Faye with its inevitable reaction on the French factory at Surat. De Faye was getting tired in Madagascar where he had nothing to do, and realising that the centre of gravity had definitely shifted to India he left the island for Surat on the 19th October, 1668, with three ships, "*L'Aigle d'Or,*" "*La Marie*" and "*La Force,*" taking Macara, François Martin and a number of others with him. Crossing to Ceylon first and then proceeding up the Malabar coast he stopped at Cochin, a possession of the Dutch, where he was well received by the authorities. The ships next stopped at Calicut where the Zamorin expressed a great desire to ally himself with the French in order to get

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, pp. 140-144. See also *Castonnet des Fosses—L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 81.

rid of the Dutch. But de Faye replied that he could not do anything without going to Surat first, where he arrived on the 10th March, 1669. We shall see later the relations between Caron and de Faye, and the disorders which broke out in the French settlement at Surat. In the meantime let us notice briefly the development of French trade and commerce in the East during the early years of the establishment of the Company.

## 10. *Development of French Trade and Commerce in the East*

India in those days was divided into four distinct commercial regions,—Surat, the Malabar coast, the Coromandel coast and Bengal. The region commanded by the Surat market did not produce any of the famous spices which had originally attracted the European nations to the East. But it produced another thing of great importance, namely cotton, which in various forms, either raw or woven textures, held the first place in the Surat market. Besides cotton, Surat was the market for a large number of other things also, pepper from the Malabar coast, indigo from Agra, musk from Patna, cinnamon from Ceylon, cowries from the Maldives, silk from Bengal, and finally also the greatest attraction for the European commercial nations, spices, which were brought to Surat from the Moluccas by Arab and Malayan ships despite the strict watch of the Dutch.[1] It was the intention of Caron from the time of his departure from France to establish a French factory at Surat, and on arriving there at the beginning

[1] Weber—*La Compagnie Française des Indes*, p. 222.

of 1668 he immediately put his plan into execution. It was mainly through Caron's great knowledge about Eastern trade and commerce that the French settlement at Surat met with a happy success from the very beginning and developed rapidly in importance. The arrival of de la Haye's squadron in 1671 gave the Company the prestige it required, and soon after the transfer of the *Conseil Souverain* from Fort Dauphin to Surat made the latter the chief French settlement in the East and the centre of the Company's trade and commerce. The prosperity of the Surat settlement however was short-lived, and by the end of the seventeenth century it fell into unimportance owing to various factors, both economic and political. The Company had contracted huge debts at Surat which it had no means to repay. The local authorities there made more and more rigorous demands about the customs duties payable by the European Companies. Added to these the prohibition of the import of linen into France and the rapid development and rise into importance of the settlement at Pondicherry under the guidance of its able chief, François Martin, dealt a severe blow to the Surat settlement, with the result that by the end of the century not a single French ship visited Surat.[1]

Fortunately however Caron had not neglected to secure for the Company a footing in other commercial centres, and had during the early days of the establishment at Surat sent enterprising agents to the other three regions to lay the foundations of French factories there. The Malabar coast extending from Goa to Cape Comorin was the greatest centre of the production of pepper, which was brought every year to the numerous small

1 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 223.

ports on the coast, Mirzapur, Rajapur, Balapatam, Tremepatam, Calicut, Cannanore, Tellicherry and Cochin, the last being in the hands of the Dutch. Caron sent de Flacourt to this region to found a factory at Balapatam, and later factories were established at two other places, Tellicherry and Rajapur. Every year small boats freighted by the Company would come to these places to load the cargo of pepper purchased by its merchants and carry it to Surat from where it was sent to France.[1]

Bengal was the principal market for silk, which was exported in various forms. To this important region Caron sent Bourreau Deslandes, who established a small factory at Balasore and later a settlement at Chandernagore which in course of time rose to great importance. A small factory was also established at Kasimbazar, the centre of the production of silk. The Coromandel coast did not enjoy any commercial speciality as the three other regions, but its situation made it easy to bring together the productions of other centres not only in India but also in Ceylon and in the Archipelago. It was also well known for the manufacture of cotton goods in various forms. To this region Caron sent Macara to found a settlement at Masulipatam, the most important commercial centre on the coast. But it was really François Martin who established the French in this part of the peninsula by the foundation of Pondicherry destined to be the capital of French India.

Caron's policy was not to limit French trade to India alone but to extend it to other countries as well. From the first years therefore French vessels started from

[1] Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 224.

Surat for the Persian gulf and frequented the ports of Basra, Ormuz and Bandar Abbas. A factory was soon established in the last mentioned place, and the Company maintained a representative at the Persian Court. Caron was also anxious to take a hand in the trade with Ceylon, as the first step in the extension of French trade to the Far East. Ceylon's principal wealth was cinnamon, but the Dutch were firmly established there and their watchful rivalry made it difficult for the French to obtain a footing in that island. The story of the French attempt to establish a settlement in Ceylon will be narrated in a later Chapter. The French Company had not ignored the very lucrative trade of the Archipelago, the centre of the production of spices, and Caron intended to establish settlements at two places inspite of the vigorous opposition of the Dutch who claimed the entire region for themselves and tried to exclude all rivals. The places chosen by Caron were Bantam in the island of Java where the English and the Danes were already trading and the island of Banka near the north coast of Sumatra. The establishment of settlements at these two places would have been certainly advantageous to the French Company since although they did not produce any spices, a large number of Asiatic merchants came there, in spite of the strict watch of the Dutch, to trade in the products of the Moluccas, specially cloves and nutmegs. In 1671 Caron went himself to Bantam, founded a settlement there and returned to Surat confident of the duration of the establishment. It however lasted for ten years only, and between 1681 and 1684 a quarrel having arisen between the king of Bantam and his son, the Dutch took advantage of the situation, occupied the place and turned out the English, the Danes and the

French.[1] No attempt seems to have been made upon the island of Banka, and the French Company failing to take a direct part in the trade of the Spice islands had to content itself by purchasing the products of the islands from Asiatic merchants who traded in them elsewhere eluding the vigilant watch of the Dutch.[2] Caron had also wished to build up commercial relations with the Far East, particularly with China and Japan, but nothing in fact was done in this direction. Probably, had he remained in the East for a longer period he might have succeeded in founding settlements in those two countries also.

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1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. II, pp. 298-301.
2 Weber—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 228.

# CHAPTER II

## The Despatch of a Naval Squadron under de la Haye

1. Reasons for sending out the squadron. 2. The originator of the plan. 3. Composition of the fleet. 4. Defects in fitting out the squadron. 5. Voyage from France to Madagascar. 6. The fleet at Fort Dauphin. 7. Voyage from Fort Dauphin to Surat. 8. The arrival of the fleet at Surat and the reaction on Indians and the other European nations trading in the East.

### 1. *Reasons for sending out the Squadron*

We have already noticed Colbert's policy regarding the establishment of French trade in the East. He clearly realised the two great difficulties that stood in the way, first, the difficulty of negotiating with the local kings and princes for special trading rights and privileges, and second, the almost sure opposition on the part of the other European nations who had already established their positions in the East, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English. To meet these two difficulties Colbert decided to send a strong Royal naval squadron to the Eastern waters to strengthen the efforts of the newly established "*Compagnie des Indes Orientales.*" It was recognised that the most effective argument in dealing with Oriental princes was the show of an imposing force, which would overawe them and, by impressing upon them the power and grandeur of the *Grand Monarque*, would make them more readily agreeable to grant special trading rights and privileges to the French. Moreover, the despatch of a naval squadron would remove the second difficulty also,

as the Portuguese were decadent, and neither the Dutch nor the English, who were mere trading communities in the East, could get the support of such a strong navy from their own country. In the face of a formidable French fleet the Dutch and the English would agree to concede to the French a portion of the Eastern trade rather than risk all by an open conflict. The despatch of a naval squadron would bring home to the Dutch and the English in the East the difference between them, mere trading communities, and the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* which was a pet child of the French Government. Colbert and his master Louis XIV meant to go to the utmost length in supporting the French Company to establish itself in the East. It was undoubtedly a grand move frought with immense possibilities to send out a strong Royal naval squadron, and if Colbert and Louis XIV had been persistent in their policy towards the Company, the French would certainly have been able to gain a firm foothold in the East. But, as will be seen later, their interest soon diminished and events in Europe turned their attention away from India, with the result that the magnificent fleet sent out to the East was completely lost and only a quarter of its men could return to France totally dispirited and discredited. The naval expedition on which so much hopes had been pinned turned out in the end to be merely a glorious episode without any permanent result.

## 2. *The Originator of the Plan*

With whom did the idea originate to send out a naval squadron to the East? It is not unlikely that Colbert was the originator of the plan, as it probably

formed a part of his wider project regarding the establishment of the French in the East. But Francois Martin is of opinion that the idea originated with the Director of the French Company at Surat, Caron. This is what he says about the origin of the plan. "M. Caron, to whom the Court and the Company had given their full confidence and whom they always believed to be the only person capable of establishing the commerce of our nation in India, was given their confidence again with regard to the letters which he wrote on arriving there (India), in which he stated that he needed battleships and capable men for the execution of the enterprises which he had in view. I have not read the letters and I have no knowledge about the details. I am stating according to what I have heard M. Caron say, speaking about the plans which he had projected and which he regarded as sure through the help of necessary forces. This also persuaded the king to give orders to equip a squadron for the Indies." [1]

Another contemporary evidence also suggests that it was the representations of Caron which were mainly responsible for persuading the king and the Company to send out a strong naval squadron to the East. "The Director-General, Caron, . . . seeing that all his first enterprises had succeeded rather well . . . made plans and thought of important enterprises in the best places in the East; and in order to execute his projects he wrote to France that he should be sent help in men, ships and money, upon which his Majesty and the Company, delighted to see things succeeding gloriously, made great expenses to send a considerable fleet which started from France in the year, 1670." [2]

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, Vol. I, pp. 303-4.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 262.

Caron had certainly very wide projects in his mind and had favoured the idea of establishing a large number of French factories in distant lands, so that the newly established *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* might stand forth as an equal rival to the English and Dutch Companies. Not only that, he had also suggested to the authorities in France that the French Company should have a port of its own, in absolute possession and free from dependence on any other Power, either native or European.[1] There was nothing surprising in that, as all the other European nations who came to trade in the East thought likewise. In 1669, there was a question of the French acquiring the Danish town of Tranquebar on the Coromandel coast. At one time Caron thought of seizing Sandrocar, an island in the Bay of Cambay not very far from Surat, but later Ceylon seemed to him to be much more suitable for his purpose. Even later, when the naval squadron had started from France, Caron chose the island of Banka and made a treaty with the king of Bantam for the French occupation of the island.[2] For all these enterprises it was necessary for the French Company to have a strong navy at its command, not only to induce the local rulers to be more favourable to its demands, but also to terrorise the other European nations in the East who would certainly oppose any threat to their vested interests. It was therefore the representations of Caron which led to the sending out of the French naval squadron to the East; but Colbert was also partly responsible for the step, since he must have convinced himself first about its utility before agreeing to the representations of Caron.

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Française avant Dupleix*, p. 88.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 287.

It is interesting in this connexion to note that the idea was first suggested in a letter to Colbert dated the 1st April, 1666 written by la Boullaye le Gouz who, it will be remembered, had been sent out from France on an embassy to the Mughal Court and had arrived at Surat a month earlier.[1] In that letter he gave an account of the state of things at Surat, his views regarding the trade which the French could carry on there and the policy they should follow. He advised the sending of a squadron, "*et de n'épargner ni poudre, ni boulets, pour abattre l'orgueil des Hollandais*" (and to spare neither powder nor bullets to put down the arrogance of the Dutch).[2] Although the letter did not produce any immediate result, it certainly made some impression upon Colbert and must have helped him in coming to a decision on the matter four years later.

### 3. *Composition of the Fleet*

Thanks to the efforts of Colbert the Royal squadron destined for the East Indies was ready to sail early in 1670. The fleet consisted of nine ships.[3] The Admiral's ship was commanded by de la Haye, "Lieutenant-General of His Majesty in all the Oriental countries." The Vice-Admiral's ship *Le Triomphe* was under the command of Foran, and the Rear-Admiral's ship, *Le Julles* under that of Deluchet. The other six ships were, *Le Flamand* commanded by

1 See pages 33 34.

2 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 76.

3 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 262. Martin gives the number as 7.—see "Mémoires," I, p. 304; while Henri Froidevaux puts it at 10.—see Cambridge History of India, Vol. V, p. 67. Probbly Abbé Carré's figure is correct, since he gives the names of the ships.

Dumainne; *Le St. Joan de Bayonne* by Desmarail Gabaret; *La Diligente* by de la Houssaye; *La Sultanne* by de Beaulieu; *L'Indienne* by de l'Estrille and *L'Europe* by Despré. These were all king's ships, and to them there were to have been added three ships of the Company, *Le Vautour*, *Le Dauphin* and *Le Phénix*. They were to have sailed together but were unavoidably delayed.

De la Haye was a man of great qualities and well-known in France for his bravery and his knowledge of strategy and fortifications. Malleson is rather harsh in his judgment on him and based his criticism entirely on his conduct of the naval expedition. "His conduct . . . appears to have been utterly unworthy of a man occupying his high position."[1] But he was a soldier of good reputation before he was sent out to the Indies in command of the naval expedition, and even after the disastrous end of that expedition he came back to France and fought in other theatres of war in which the country was engaged at the time and died in action in 1677. For the failure of his mission in India two factors were mainly responsible: first, the instructions he received at the time of his departure from France to submit to the views of the Company's Directors in India in everything, even though he knew that they were wrong; and second, the European preoccupations of Louis XIV which made him completely neglect the Indian enterprise. The only reinforcement sent out to de la Haye was towards the end of 1674, but then it reached too late to relieve the situation at St. Thomé. It is however true that de la Haye was not as resolute or determined a man as he should have been, and that he often missed splendid opportunities

1 Malleson—History of the French in India, p. 17.

and failed to see wherein lay the true interests of the Company. But at the same time he could also rise to the height of bravery and tenacity, as was proved by his stubborn defence of St. Thomé for twenty-six months against such heavy odds. The more fitting judgment on him would be that he was typical of the French aristocracy of the period, sometimes rising to splendid heights and sometimes falling into reckless carelessness.

De la Haye had as his Brigadier-General (*Maréchal de Camp*) de Grateloup,[1] a man of great military distinction. There were some well chosen officers, some volunteers and four companies of soldiers under experienced captains. On the naval side de la Haye had under him de Turel as Chief of the Squadron (Chef d'escadre),[2] who enjoyed a high reputation in the navy, and a number of other well selected officers. But though outwardly the squadron looked exceptionally strong and held out promises of brilliant achievements in the East, as we shall see later, some of the officers had no heart in the business and were eager to return to France at the earliest possible opportunity, which weakened the squadron not only materially but also psychologically, as it lowered the morale of the men who remained.

### 4. *Defects in Fitting out the Squadron*

The equipment of the squadron was very defective and left much to be desired. It was, however, not something peculiar to the fitting out of this particular squadron, but was a common drawback in France. Abbé Carré's statement about the ordinary drawbacks in

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*. I. p. 304.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*. p. 262.

maritime equipments in France is not in the least exaggerated. "It is a thing which I have always noticed for the last ten years that I have been on the sea that in all our (naval) equipments one never takes the necessary care about the repairing of ships, their loading and their personnel at the proper time, but always in haste, disorder, embarrassment and with great useless expenses because of want of experience on the part of the officers who are to command. That is the reason why frequently the ships are not in a condition to sail in the season of favourable winds; or if they start at the proper time, they are obliged to put into port a little after their departure because of some considerable defects which are found in them due to want of foresight and care before their departure. This often causes the loss of voyage, of merchandise, of equipments and even of ships, to the great injury and damage to the interests of the fleet, as I shall show later on."[1] This criticism is fully justified with regard to the equipment of de la Haye's squadron. The fleet which should have consisted of twelve ships started from France with three ships less which had not been timely equipped for the voyage, and within a few days three more ships were compelled to put into port at Lisbon for some serious defects in their equipments.

### 5. *Voyage from France to Madagascar*

The Royal squadron started from the roadstead of La Rochelle at the beginning of March, 1670.[2] It had

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 262.

2 *Ibid.* Martin simply states March, 1670,—Mémoires, I, p. 304; while Henri Froidevaux gives the date as March 30, 1670,—Cambridge History of India, Vol. V, p. 67.

to pick up on the way three ships of the Company, *Le Vautour*, *Le Dauphin* and *Le Phénix* which were being equipped in the harbour of Port Louis. The squadron was therefore compelled, after starting from La Rochelle, to cast anchor at Belle Isle, where it lost eight to ten days waiting for the Company's ships which were not yet ready to sail, although it was the latest in the season to start for the East Indies. It was not therefore possible for the fleet to wait any longer, and it set sail from Belle Isle at the end of March. But hardly had it been fifteen days on the sea when some serious defects were discovered in the equipments of three of the ships, *La Sultanne*, *Le Triomphe* and *L'Indienne*, and they were sent to Lisbon for repairs; so that the fleet which should have consisted of twelve ships at the time of its departure from France was reduced to six within less than three weeks. On their way to Lisbon *Le Triomphe* and *L'Indienne* met with a strange encounter. They were stopped by a Dutch fleet of thirty-six ships and compelled to salute the Dutch flag. They were then allowed to proceed unmolested to Lisbon where they arrived two days later.[1]

At Lisbon they found the ship *La Sultanne* which had reached earlier. After some time the three ships, having been refitted and equipped for their voyage at a great expense and loss of time which could easily have been avoided if their defects had been foreseen and remedied before their departure from France, started from Lisbon and sailed together up to St. Jague. There disagreement broke out among the men as to the route to be followed, although they had express orders from de la Haye about the places they must touch on

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p 263.

their way in order to get news of the main fleet that had gone before. They parted company and followed different routes according to their own whims and private interests, little caring to think about the great harm that their delay would cause to the enterprise for which they had started.[1] We shall see later what happened to these three ships. The main fleet reached Cape Verd and lost fifteen days there waiting for the three ships, which however did not appear. Leaving therefore letters of instructions for them in case they happened to arrive there later, the fleet started from Cape Verd and sailed straight to the Bay of Saldanha near the Cape of Good Hope, where it remained for six weeks for some rest as well as to wait for the above three ships.

There was another reason, more important than others, for the prolonged stay of the fleet in the Bay of Saldanha. De la Haye realised the value of having a suitable harbour and a fortified settlement at the southern extremity of the African continent, which would serve as a very useful wayside station for the French ships making their long voyage to India. It was not a new idea but had been thought of already by two other European nations trading in the East, namely, the Portuguese and the Dutch. De la Haye reconnoitred very thoroughly the Bay of Saldanha, the Bay of St. Martin and other bays and rivers in the neighbourhood in order to find out a spot convenient for establishing a settlement. A man of very active nature, he took part personally in all these explorations. There was some trouble with the Dutch who had a fortified establishment at Table Bay, but it did not lead to any im-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 264.

portant consequences.[1] The fleet then sailed for Fort Dauphin in the island of Madagascar, which it reached in October, about seven months after its departure from France.

### 6. *The Fleet at Fort Dauphin*

The attempts of the French to colonise Madagascar and their ultimate failure have already been noticed in Chapter I. No doubt the idea was a very sound one that the French should have a harbour and a fortified establishment in the island of Madagascar which lay midway between the Cape of Good Hope and India. But they attempted to conquer the whole island and colonise it in the hope of great profits, and they were ultimately defeated by three forces working against them, the climate, the nature of the soil and the persistent opposition of the natives. Indeed, Madagascar proved to be the burial ground of the French. and all the men and ships sent there perished almost completely. Finally in 1672, the Company abandoned all its projects about the island. The great blunder that the French did was to regard Madagascar as being covetable in itself and not merely as a midway resting station for the ultimate goal, namely, India and the Far East. In their vain attempts to colonise Madagascar they dissipated a good deal of their resources in men and materials, which if employed in India would have led to their successful establishment there. When de la Haye's squadron arrived at Fort Dauphin, both the Chief and his officers regarded it almost as the goal of their voyage.[2] They did not réalise clearly the purpose for which they had been sent and had no idea about the Indies nor about

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 304.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 264.

the projects that had been made for the extension of French trade and comerce there. They made an unusually prolonged stay in Madagascar, about ten months, and took in hand a thoughtless enterprise which, as we shall see later, far from doing them any good had the only effect of considerably weakening the squadron and thereby ruining the prospects of the mission on which it had been sent. The whole thing reveals a deplorable lack of responsibility on the part of the men concerned.

At Fort Dauphin de la Haye found the former Lieutenant-General, M. de Mondevergue, who had led the French naval expedition to Madagascar in 1666.[1] He had strong enemies at the Court and had been accused of embezzlement and of having pursued private interests. Following orders on the subject de la Haye sent him back to France on board one of the ships lying at Fort Dauphin on their way back from Surat. On his return to France, Mondevergue was arrested at Port Louis by the King's orders and was tried on the charges brought against him, but he died just a few days before his acquittal. Regarding the charge of pursuing private interests, Martin gives an emphatic denial; and about the other charge of embezzlement, he says that he has no knowledge of it. He ends the matter by saying, "What did him (Mondevergue) the greatest harm was the little discretion he exercised in declaiming publicly against a man who had at that time much influence at the Court and who did not spare any pains to push the matter."[2]

While the Royal squadron lay at Fort Dauphin there arrived some of the other ships which had been

1 See page 29.

2 *Mémoires de François Martin*, 1, pp. 305-6.

left behind. Of the three Company's ships which had started from France a little after the departure of the main fleet, *Le Dauphin* went to Mozambique where she rested for six months, and *Le Phénix* went to the Bay of Saldanha where she would have perished completely because of the death of all her sailors. She was however saved by the timely arrival of another ship, *L'Indienne*, which having followed her route according to the orders of de la Haye had gone to the Bay of Saldanha for some rest. There she found *Le Phénix* in a miserable plight and put some of her own sailors on board that ship. They then both left the Bay and sailed together to Fort Dauphin. Nearly at the same time there arrived also the two other ships of the Royal squadron, *Le Triomphe* and *La Sultanne*, bringing large quantities of sugar and tobacco from Brazil where they had gone and remained for a month. The third of the Company's ships, *Le Vautour*, had followed her route straight on without touching at Fort Dauphin and was the first to arrive at Surat on the 21st February, 1671.[1]

At Fort Dauphin there was a very unfortunate outbreak of dissatisfaction among the officers of the squadron against de la Haye which might have led to serious consequences. It was however a common feature among French officers, and in fact this reckless indiscipline was one of the principal factors which ruined the French cause in the East. The naval officers of the squadron joined together and began to behave in a defiant manner towards their Chief, de la Haye, and the army officers also, to whom the nature of de la Haye was not sufficiently pleasing, joined the ranks of the malcontents. De la Haye prudently suffered all these

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 265.

things, but matters went so far that the ring-leaders of the opposition assembled at Fort Dauphin and even discussed a proposal to arrest the Lieutenant-General and send him back to France on some pretext or other. De Grateloup, the Brigadier-General, saved the situation. Like a clever man he entered the opposition party just to know its secret intentions; and by his tact and prudence he brought the officers back to their senses, warning them about the consequences of their intended action which could never be approved in Paris. This checked them for the moment, but bad blood still continued and on several occasions the malcontents showed open opposition.[1] The most immediate result was that a number of officers left the squadron and went back to France by the ship, *L'Aigle d'Or*, which had stopped at Fort Dauphin on her return voyage from Surat.

Immediately on his arrival de la Haye took possession of Fort Dauphin in the name of the king, following the orders he had received on the subject, and put officers there on behalf of his Majesty.[2] The Company had nothing more to do and was saved from the terrible expenses it had to incur for the upkeep and maintenance of the fort. Probably the idea that he had come to act on behalf of the king and not merely to further the interests of the Company turned the head of the Lieutenant-General, and he undertook a very rash enterprise which cost him dearly. The whole thing arose from his desire to punish a village chief named Ramouset for having disobeyed his orders to meet him with his followers.[3] De la Haye captured the

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 305.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 306.
3 *Ibid.*

village which was about five or six leagues away from the Fort, but the chieftain escaped into the mountainous interior of the island. It might have been quite easy for de la Haye to seize Ramouset, if he had attempted it with less noise and fuss and if he had depended for information upon men who had been long settled there and knew the topography of the country thoroughly well. But instead of that he relied entirely upon himself, and without knowing the climate, the people and the nature of the country he made complete preparations " for a large scale war in which he wished to go in person with the flower of his army to seek and fight a single man who was already a vassal of the French."[1] The latter cleverly enticed the French army across many formidable rivers, scorching deserts and over steep rocks in pursuit of him. The results were that after spending several months in this mad pursuit de la Haye came back to Fort Dauphin bringing with him a dangerous illness which nearly cost him his life, and more than a thousand brave French soldiers perished. There were also a needless consumption of the provisions of the squadron and a great loss of time, which was probably much more important than anything else.

After recovering from the disasters of this ill-conceived adventure de la Haye passed on to the island of Mascarenhas (later known as the Isle of Bourbon), where he replaced the Company's government by Royal administration and then came back to Fort Dauphin.

The Royal squadron lay at Fort Dauphin for ten months, from October, 1670 to July, 1671. This needlessly prolonged stay was harmful to the expedition in two ways ; first, by the loss of valuable time and second

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 264.

by the loss of a large number of officers and men who died or went back to France. It should have been clearly realised that time was the most important factor for the success of the enterprise. The French squadron should have taken advantage of a time when there was no shadow of war yet in Europe, and should have straight proceeded to Surat, where Caron was waiting impatiently with all his plans ready for execution. After vainly waiting for months for the arrival of the squadron he at last left for Bantam; and when the squadron arrived at Surat it had to waste three valuable months there, waiting for the return of Caron without whom nothing could be done. Thus a golden opportunity was recklessly thrown away.

Secondly, as has been noticed already, some of the principal officers of the squadron who were dissatisfied with de la Haye went back to France on board the ship *L'Aigle d'Or*. These included Foran, Captain of the Vice-Admiral's ship, Devilerceau, Captain of the Guards of de la Haye, Dumevillet and de la Houssay, Captain of *L'Indienne*. Besides the loss of these officers who went away, the squadron also suffered a heavy loss of other principal officers who died. Among them were de Beaulieu, Captain of *La Sultanne*, Deluchet, Captain of *Le Julles*, Dautigny, Captain of the Infantry and a number of others.[1] Added to these, the further heavy loss of more than a thousand men, both soldiers and sailors, who perished in the war against Ramouset dealt a very severe blow to the squadron.

### 7. *Voyage from Fort Dauphin to Surat*

At last after a stay of about ten months (October, 1670 to July, 1671) at Fort Dauphin, it was decided to

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 265.

leave the island and sail for Surat. Before his departure de la Haye made arrangements for the proper administration of the island which had been placed under Royal control, and left the government of the place in the hands of Champmargou, an experienced man with a long and successful record of service at Fort Dauphin. These arrangements having been completed, the fleet finally set sail towards the end of the month of July.[1] Passing by the west of Madagascar the fleet stopped at the island of Anjouan situated to the north and rested there for five days. From Anjouan it followed its route northwards up to Socotra, and then sailing east it reached Surat at the end of the month of September. 1671.

## 8. *The Arrival of the Fleet at Surat and the Reaction on Indians and the other European Nations Trading in the East*

The arrival of such a powerful French fleet in Indian waters produced various reactions on Indians and the other European nations trading in the East. It formed the subject of common talk in the bazaars of Surat, and people spoke about it according to their personal likes and dislikes. Some who had any ill-feeling against the other European nations in India were delighted to see such a strong French naval squadron in Indian waters. Others who had not much idea about the French were astonished at the wonderful progress of their Company within such a short time of its estab-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 265. But according to Martin the fleet sailed from the island in August. Again according to Carré the fleet arrived at Surat at the end of September, while according to Martin it arrived in October, see Mémoires, I, pp. 306-7. However the discrepancy is very small and of not much importance.

lishment in India, and they suspected that the arrival of the formidable naval squadron indicated some great, unknown plans of the French. Everybody, however, was in great suspense about the object of the fleet.

Of all the other European nations trading in the East, the Dutch were probably the most concerned at the arrival of the French fleet. The main reason was that the major portion of the Eastern trade being then in the hands of the Dutch, they stood to lose more than anybody else by the coming of another European rival. The Portuguese power in India was already in the last period of decadence, and most of their important possessions in the East had been wrested from their hands by the Dutch. The English power in India was also as yet only in its infancy. The English Company was not at this time as vigorous or energetic as the Dutch Company for several reasons, the most important being the political upheaval in England about the middle of the seventeenth century, from the catastrophic results of which on its fortunes the Company had not yet fully recovered. The Dutch then being the most concerned at the arrival of the French fleet tried their best to counteract its reaction on the people of India by all sorts of false and fantastic propaganda. They immediately spread the rumour among the local population that the French being unsuccessful in all their trading enterprises in the East had decided to wind up their commerce and infest the Eastern waters as corsairs, and that it was only to pillage all country shipping that they had brought out such a strong fleet. The rumour was so widespread and won the belief of the local population to such an extent that the Mughal Governor of Surat and other principal officers showed great unwillingness to furnish food and other necessary supplies to the

French squadron, and de la Haye coming to know about it retained most of his officers and men on board the ships and prohibited their going ashore lest they should come into troubles with the Mughal officers.[1] But though the Dutch deceived the local people in this manner, they themselves were quite alarmed. When they saw the French fleet waiting at Surat for the return of Caron, they had no doubts that the object of the fleet was to support some big enterprise of the French Company, which could be only harmful to their own trade and commerce established in the best and the most important places in the East, about which they knew that Caron who was once in their own employ had full knowledge and information. So they tried to take all protective measures against the French in case the latter wished to intrude on places which they regarded as lying within their sphere of influence, if not under their direct political domination. Profiting themselves by the time that the French squadron lost at Surat on account of the absence of Caron, the Dutch fortified their possessions, and collecting together all their available forces in the East equipped a fleet of twenty-five ships which they kept in the neighbourhood of Ceylon, so valuable to them from commercial as well as strategic points of view.

Next to the Dutch it was the Portuguese who expressed the greatest opposition to any intrusion of the French in the Indies which they regarded as lying wholly in their own domains to the exclusion of all other European nations, although their power in the East had been reduced to insignificance by the Dutch. They were all the more infuriated by the fact that the French Lieutenant-General, de la Haye, had assumed the title

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 266.

of Viceroy immediately after entering the Indian waters. The Portuguese could not at all tolerate the idea that there could be any other European Viceroy in India except their own at Goa. Abbé Carré speaks of an interesting interview he had with the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa when the latter was wild with anger at the assumption of the title of Viceroy by de la Haye.[1] Although France was at this time an ally of Portugal and was virtually her protector against Spain, the Portuguese in India had not the least amount of gratitude for the help they were receiving in Europe from France in their struggle for independence against Spain. Upon the arrival of the French fleet their jealousy burst forth in all their towns and dependencies in India where they declaimed violently against the French and declared that they had no worse enemies in the East than them. In spite of the fact that the French and the Portuguese were both Catholic nations as against the Protestant Dutch and English, the Portuguese treated the French as heretics and infidels for having come to India without the permission of the king of Portugal. They went so far in their opposition to the French that some of them, including the most prominent figures at Goa, even declared that they would no longer recognise the king of Portugal as their legitimate ruler if he did not declare war against the king of France for having sent a fleet to India without his permission.[2] It was probably an idle talk and did not mean much in reality, but it clearly showed the extent of the arrogant pretensions of the Portuguese in India and their extreme jealousy against the French. Not being able to oppose the French fleet openly, they set about weakening it as

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 141.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 267.

much as possible by subtle and underhand means, as will be described later.

The English also expressed a good deal of jealousy of this new European rival, but it was not so aggressive as in the case of the Dutch nor so wild as in the case of the Portuguese. Outwardly they showed themselves to be in complete harmony with the French. They could not put forth so fantastic claims on the whole of the East as the Portuguese, nor did they have yet so many vested interests to protect as the Dutch. Moreover, in Europe at this time good relations prevailed between France and England, as the English king Charles II was a pensioner of Louis XIV. But below this surface of harmony and good understanding between the two nations in India there was a good deal of jealousy on the part of the English against their new rival, as they thought that any extension of French commerce in India would be only harmful to the interests of their own Company. However, opinion differed among them. On the one hand there was the example of Gerald Aungier, the Governor of Bombay, who expressed to Abbé Carré his sincere good wishes for the French and allowed all the French deserters who were in the service of the English at Bombay to go back to Surat and rejoin the service of their own nation.[1] On the other hand there was the example of the English Governor of Madras, Langhorn, trying to ruin the French during the siege of St. Thomé by an extremely unfriendly attitude amounting to almost open opposition, even after the declaration of war in Europe in 1672 when the English and the French fought side by side against the Dutch.

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1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 119-21.

# CHAPTER III

## The State of Affairs of the French Company at Surat

1. Surat—a great commercial centre. 2. Factors which disturbed the peaceful commerce of Surat. 3. State of French trade in the East. 4. Defects of the French. 5. Internal dissension among the chiefs of the French Company in India. 6. Appointment of new Directors. 7. Caron's return from Bantam. 8. Internal discord in the French settlement at Surat. 9. Decision to lead the squadron to Ceylon. 10. Continuation of the state of disorder at Surat.

### 1. *Surat—A Great Commercial Centre*

In the 17th century Surat was the greatest port in India and indeed in the whole East. Its importance did not lie so much in the production or manufacture of any important articles in its neighbourhood as in its geographical position which inevitably made it the centre of the carrying trade in the East. On one side lay the productive centres of the Far East, Malay, the Spice islands and further beyond, China and Japan, and on the other lay the productive centres of Persia and Arabia and the Red Sea ports. It was therefore found convenient to bring goods from the east and the west to Surat which served as a great distributing centre. The total volume of trade which entered the port was tremendous, and the customs duties realised there furnished a considerable portion of the revenues of the Mughal Empire. It was a great cosmopolitan city and men of all nationalities were to be seen jostling and rubbing shoulders in the streets of Surat. It drew forth admiration from many foreign travellers, and

Souchu de Rennefort called it "*le Magasin des Indes et de l'Asie et la première ville de l'univers pour son commerce*" [1] (the warehouse of the Indies and of Asia and the greatest city in the world for her commerce).

There were three European settlements at Surat, the English, the Dutch and the French. Of these the French being the youngest had not yet opened any inland branch factories. But the English had established factories throughout Gujarat, at Ahmadabad, Broach, Baroda and elsewhere in order to maintain close touch with the producers of indigo and cotton goods. The Dutch in their turn established themselves at Agra as soon as their organisation at Surat had become effective and at once took the leading position in the indigo trade.[2] The Portuguese were not established in force within the Gulf of Cambay, but dominated its shipping from their fortified posts at Daman and Diu. The arrangement was quite effective from their point of view. "Diu is situated at the southern point of Kathiawar, Daman faces it on the mainland, and holding these two posts in strength the Portuguese could maintain an effective watch over the shipping which entered the Gulf, and could enforce their system of licences without reference to the Mughal authorities on land." [3] At the time of which we are speaking the Portuguese had no doubt lost their dominating position to a great extent due to the jealousy and rivalry of the English and the Dutch, but they were still able to put effective pressure upon the native merchants to purchase trading licences for their ships on their voyages to the Persian Gulf.[4]

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 79.
2 Moreland—From Akbar to Aurangzeb, p. 40.
3 Moreland—India at the Death of Akbar, p. 205.
4 Mémoires de Francois Martin, I, pp. 237-39.

## 2. *Factors which Disturbed the Peaceful Commerce of Surat*

The European nations carried on a very lucrative trade at Surat, but there were two factors which caused considerable disturbance and injury to the trade and commerce of that big city; first, the raids of the Marathas, and second, the conduct of the Mughal Governor towards the merchants of the town both Indian and European.

The causes and the course of the conflict between the Marathas and the Mughal Empire lie outside the scope of the present volume. A number of circumstances had given rise to a revival of Hindu nationalist feelings in the reign of Aurangzeb, and a very formidable military force had been organised by the wonderful genius of the Maratha leader, Sivaji, who carried on ceaseless campaigns against the Mughal Empire. Surat lay an attractive and easy prey before the Marathas. It was the richest port of the Mughal Empire, and the customs alone yielded a revenue of twelve lakhs of rupees a year. It had no strong wall to protect it and the Governor, Inayet Khan, had deliberately kept the defences of the city in an extremely poor condition, appropriating to himself the pay of five hundred soldiers which he drew from the Treasury. The Marathas came and sacked Surat from top to bottom for four days, from the 6th to the 10th January, 1664. The English and the Dutch factories were spared, but the raid completely dislocated the trade and commerce of the city.[1]

Things were returning to normal, but in April, 1670 there was a widespread alarm throughout the

1 Sarkar—A Short History of Aurangzeb, pp. 205-6.

town of a second Maratha raid. The town was not protected by any continuous wall, and there was particularly one opening through which it was feared an attack might be made. The Governor of the town requested Caron to advise him how to put that place in a proper state of defence. Caron told him that the only thing that could be done immediately was to close the opening with stones, and to make an entrenchment behind it to place musketeers and a bastion to set up cannons. But the Governor did absolutely nothing, and it was even suspected that he was in secret league with Sivaji.[1] On the 3rd October, 1670, the Marathas attacked the city again. Most of the Indian merchants and even the Government officers had fled away on the previous day. The Marathas sacked the city at leisure, burnt down nearly half of it and retreated on the 5th. Not much damage was done to the European settlements. By means of rich presents to the Marathas Caron averted an attack on the French factory, but he had also made provision against any eventual attack by putting the place in a state of defence. The English were attacked but their armed resistance turned away the invaders. The Dutch settlement was spared because it was situated far away from the centre of the town and the Marathas never went up to that quarter.[2] According to the Mughal official estimate Sivaji carried off sixty-six lakhs of rupees worth of booty. But the real loss of Surat was much more than that, it was the complete destruction of the trade and commerce of that place, the richest port in India. "For several years after Sivaji's withdrawal from it, the town used to throb with panic every now and then, whenever

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 247.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

any Maratha force came within a few days' march of it, or even at false alarms of their coming. On every such occasion the merchants would quickly remove their goods to ships, the citizens would flee to the villages, and the Europeans would hasten to Swally. Business was effectually scared away from Surat." [1]

The second factor which caused a good deal of disturbance and injury to the trade and commerce of the city was the conduct of the Mughal Governor towards the merchants, both Indian and European. He was an extremely avaricious man and forced the principal citizens to give him rich presents regularly. But his greed was insatiable, and the more he got the more he demanded. No redress could be had from the Imperial Government, as the Governor had a brother at the Court who had much influence there and could successfully misrepresent things in his favour. All sections of the city's population, Muslim, Hindu and European, were equally exposed to the tyranny of the Governor. Being warned that several Hindu inhabitants were withdrawing from the town with their families as much to escape from his extortions as for fear of another Maratha raid about which there was a widespread alarm, the Governor closed the gates of the town, posted guards on all sides and levied a tax on the citizens on the plea of having to pay the soldiers raised for the defence of the town against the Marathas.[2] Even the Europeans were not exempt from the tyranny of the Governor, and had to suffer considerable insults and indignities. The climax was reachd when the Governor secretly plotted to get rid of the Europeans by assassination, which compelled the English, the Dutch and the French to for-

1 Sarkar—A Short History of Aurangzeb, p. 222.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 97.

tify themselves in their settlements at Surat and Swally and never to go out except being well-armed and accompanied by faithful retinues. Things went on in this manner for some time when the Governor unable to do anything against the Europeans showed himself ready to be appeased by some rich presents and considerable sums of money. But these merely whetted his appetite and he stopped the ordinary walks and diversions of the Europeans, and even forbade them to sound trumpets at meal-times or when the Chiefs of their Companies came out on the streets, in the hope that they would offer him again large sums of money to buy back their old rights and privileges. But the Europeans were by this time thoroughly tired of him and were not in the least willing to try to appease him by presents. The Chiefs of the European settlements even stopped paying their customary courtesy visits to the Governor. The President of the English settlement, Aungier, no longer able to suffer the tyranny of the Governor, left Grey, a merchant of the Company, with some clerks to carry on the affairs of the settlement and himself withdrew to Bombay with a determination never to return to Surat, or at least not during the term of office of that Governor. The Directors of the French Company also kept themselves aloof, and decided not to send the valuable presents which they had at Surat for the Mughal Emperor and which were now left to rot in their warehouse.[1]

### 3. *State of French Trade in the East*

The French were as yet newly established in the East. Barely three years had passed since the estab-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 98.

lishment of their first factory in India, at Surat, in 1668. But already through the wonderful energy of Caron, they had succeeded in building up a considerable trade. Negotiations had been taken in hand with many of the Asiatic kings and princes, which were mostly successful and resulted in the acquisition by the French of valuable trading rights and privileges, and the good will and protection of the local rulers. An embassy had been sent to the Court at Agra, and the *Grand Monarque* had written a personal letter to the Great Mughal. The result was not unsatisfactory, though not quite what the French had hoped. When the Directors of the French Company, Caron and de Faye, visited the Mughal Governor of Surat in 1669, the latter received them warmly and assured them of the protection of the Emperor.[1] The personal letter of Louis XIV to the king of Persia in 1666 had, as has been noticed already, created a very favourable impression in the Court of Ispahan. The Persian king showed himself friendly to the French and granted them a firman allowing them to trade and establish settlements in his kingdom. Negotiations with the Court of Golconda in 1669 were highly successful in spite of the opposition of the Dutch and the English, and the French received a firman from the king permitting them to carry on trade and commerce in every part of his kingdom and to establish a factory at Masulipatam. The king of Bijapur showed himself a great friend of the French and permitted their Company to establish a settlement at Rebak.[2] Many of the lesser princes were eager to favour the French and gain their alliance. The kings of Ceylon, Calicut, Cochin, Bantam and other

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 84.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 143.

places showed their eagerness for the protection of the French against the Dutch, and were willing to grant them all the favours they asked. The various trade missions of the French Company to China, Siam, Macassar and other places were very favourably received, thanks mainly to the efforts of the French religious houses already established there. French ships had been sent to Persia, Arabia, Achin, Bantam and even further beyond, and carried on a lucrative trade in clothing materials of cotton and silk, in spices, indigo, sugar, pearls and diamonds. The French settlements in India had increased in number and developed in importance. Surat, where the first settlement had been made, had become the seat of the principal establishment in the East, and a *Conseil Souverain* had been instituted there by an arrete of the 18th January, 1671 (the *Conseil Souverain* in Madagascar was suppressed in November, 1671).[1] Besides this chief settlement, there had grown up a number of others, at Rajapur near Ratnagiri and within the dominions of Sivaji, at Rebak in the kingdom of Bijapur, at Balepatam near Cannanore, at Tanore, Calicut, Mirzeo and Tellicherry on the Malabar coast, and at Masulipatam within the dominions of the king of Golconda. Caron had even wider projects in his mind, and wanted to establish settlements in Ceylon, China and Japan. He also wished to compete with the Dutch by founding a settlement at Bantam. It is really surprising how within such a short time of their establishment in India the French had achieved so much; and it should not be regarded as fantastic that had the naval expedition been conducted in a different manner from what it was, the French might have succeeded within a short time

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*. p. 91.

in seizing the major portion of the Eastern trade and in establishing a much greater influence in the East than their two old established rivals, the Dutch and the English.

### 4. *Defects of the French*

The French had achieved much within the short time of their establishment in India, but there were three serious defects among them, fickleness, lack of business ability, and internal quarrels among the men at the head of their affairs in India. The French had not the capacity to pursue their object with a dogged tenacity and in the face of all difficulties and hardships. They appeared to be the most fickle-minded of all the European nations which came to trade in the East. They changed their plans as suddenly as they conceived them, and without any valid reason. During the early years of their establishment they had formed very wide projects for the extension of their trade and commerce and had founded a large number of settlements. But soon after they abandoned many of their important settlements like Mirzeo and Tellicherry on quite flimsy grounds. This indecision and sudden change of policy were harmful to the affairs of their Company in more ways than one. First, they entailed a huge waste of money, goods and labour spent in building up these establishments which were abandoned soon after their completion. Second, they made a very bad impression upon the Indian Princes and merchants who lost their faith in the fickle and quickly-changing French, and it should be remembered that the good-will and the support of the local rulers and merchants were of inestimable value to any European nation trading in the

East. Third, the establishments completed by the French were, after their abandonment, eagerly seized by the other European nations, who thus found an opportunity to prove their assertion among the people of the country that the French were a worthless and cowardly people, which inevitably led to adverse reactions on the French settlements elsewhere. For this policy of indecision and irresoluteness, the responsibility must be shared by both the *Chambre Générale* in Paris and the Directors-General of the Company in India.

The second defect of the French was their lack of business ability. In matters of business they were far inferior to their rivals the Dutch and the English; and as a matter of fact, they did not seem to have worried themselves very much about the balance of the profit from their trade and the expenses incurred for it. First, let us consider the question of shipping. Their ships almost invariably started from France badly equipped for lack of timely care and proper foresight, and made prolonged delays in their voyage to India. When at last they arrived in India, they usually stayed there for three or four years which entailed a huge expenditure on their repairs and on the maintenance of their men, often mounting much higher than the value of the merchandise which they took back to France after such a long voyage. On the other hand the ships of the English Company stayed only for a short period in India, and usually took about a year or fifteen months from the time of their departure from England to the time of their return. The English rarely retained the ships of their Company for long voyages to places like Persia, Basra, the Red Sea, Bantam, Achin, etc., but made use of country merchant

vessels which they freighted for these voyages to the great profit of their own Company as well as of the owners of the boats. This policy which would have saved them a considerable amount of money was never adopted by the French.[1] Secondly, the French often made lavish and reckless expenses for the maintenance and entertainment of their employees in the various settlements, and no strict check was applied on these general expenses. Moreover, being a nation fond of pomp and grandeur, the French often indulged in unnecessary and ostentatious displays in entertaining foreigners and firing salutes, little stopping to consider the cost they entailed. They loved rather to show off than to look to economy; and the gains they made through these pompous displays were more than counter-balanced by the expenses incurred, which considerably weakened the financial position of their Company. Thirdly, in their business transactions in India, the French relied to a very large extent upon local agents, for whom it was only natural to try to make the greatest amount of profit at the expense of the Company they served. The employees of the Company in the various settlements rarely took the trouble of gaining proper information about the business deals of these local agents. Fourthly, there was a great want of intelligent and energetic Chiefs for the different settlements, who could apply themselves earnestly to know all about the commercial possibilities of their places, and could send reports to the Chief settlement about the goods produced in their localities together with their qualities and prices and also about the sort of merchandise which had a profitable market there.[2]

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 103-4.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

The third defect of the French was the almost chronic dissension among the men at the head of the affairs of their Company in India. It was one of the most striking peculiarities of the French, which did not fail to be noticed and commented upon even by foreigners.[1] There were no doubt internal quarrels among the other European nations also, but they were neither so perpetual nor carried to such extremes as in the case of the French. Ambition, extreme love of power, jealousy of others, acute suspicion of rivals and an almost inborn spirit of faction were the commonest features among the French, which helped to maintain a perpetual state of disorder and turmoil in their settlements and contributed to a large extent to the final ruin of that nation in India. It is however a subject which deserves special and careful notice, and it is necessary therefore to go into some details.

### 5. *Internal Dissension among the Chiefs of the French Company in India*

Caron was virtually in sole control of affairs in India down to the arrival of de Faye at Surat on the 11th (or 10th) March, 1669. Before that, we have already noticed the trouble that arose between Caron and the Armenian, Macara, in which Caron got the worst of it through a decision of the *Conseil Souverain* at Fort Dauphin, de Faye having strongly supported Macara against Caron. The arrival of this man, therefore, to share the control of affairs at Surat was sure to raise fresh troubles. Caron's vindictive nature would never allow the Macara affair to rest where it was.

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 119-20. (The English Governor of Bombay spoke about it to Abbé Carré).

and his anger was now roused against the man who had supported his enemy. There was another cause of trouble also. The French Capucin missionaries, it will be remembered, had established a house at Surat, and thinking that their good offices might be of great value to the French Company, the Directors of the *Chambre-Générale* decided to admit their Father Superior, Ambroise de Preuilly, into the Surat Council with a consultative voice. But difficulties soon arose between him and Caron. Caron, a haughty man, wanted his own will to dominate, while Ambroise did not at all like to be a mere docile tool in the hands of the Company's Director. Caron complained to France that Ambroise was an agent of the Dutch and the English and should therefore be removed from the French settlements.[1] But Colbert did not believe in this accusation, and patched up a reconciliation between the two.

After his arrival at Surat de Faye went to see the Mughal Governor of the place with Caron, and Ambroise acted as interpreter. They were very well received and were assured of the protection of the Emperor. There were some petty squabbles between Caron and de Faye, but matters were cut short by the sudden death of the latter in April, 1669.[2] At the time the sudden death of de Faye was regarded as rather mysterious and some even suspected that Caron had a hand in it. The rumour was that in his anxiety to get rid of this troublesome rival Caron had him poisoned. Souchu de Rennefort relates the common story that when de Faye was ill, Caron sent him a Banian physician who gave him a drink from which he

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 83.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 84. But Martin gives the date as 1st May;—see Mémoires, I, p. 222.

died a few days later. But Martin gives an emphatic denial to this calumnious rumour, and he is a person whose evidence there is no reason to disbelieve. He did not belong to either party, kept himself aloof from the internal discords at Surat and maintained an absolutely impartial attitude. According to Martin, de Faye died of simple dysentery caused by the extreme heat of the country and the excessive quantity of water he drank. He led a very sedentary life and took no exercise at all. Moreover, as Martin says, this sort of rumour about poisoning had been spread after the death of many other persons in the Surat settlement, the authors of the rumours being the persons interested in the death of somebody one way or the other.[1] It is, therefore, safe to conclude that though Caron was anxious to get rid of him, he really had no hand in the death of de Faye.

The death of de Faye might have augured the end of all discords at Surat. But that was not to be. Immediately after his death two parties were formed in the settlement, one following Caron and the other Goujon. Goujon, a member of the Surat Council, was undoubtedly a very capable man, very honest and zealous in the service of the Company. But his zeal often outstepped its proper limits, which frequently led to disorders in the settlement. Soon after the death of de Faye, Goujon, an ambitious man that he was, took a hasty step which created an embitterment of feelings between him and Caron. On the information of a person who had been the secretary of de Faye that he had seen in the official papers that in case of the death of one of the two Directors his place would be taken by Goujon, the latter claimed this post from Caron. Caron had no desire to share control, and after a thorough search of

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, 1, pp. 222-23.

all official records nothing at all was found to substantiate the claim of Goujon. So the matter rested there. But from this time onwards there grew up a coolness between the two which gradually developed into positive hatred through later events.

When feelings were thus strained, occasions for quarrels were not difficult to find. One was furnished by the Armenian, Macara, and another by the Banian agent of the Company, Samson. We have already noticed the sworn enmity between Caron and Macara. The death of de Faye, Macara's protector, gave an opportunity to Caron to remove his old enemy from the service of the Company in India. But de Faye's place was taken by Goujon who vehemently supported Macara, going to the length of declaring that he would hold himself personally responsible to the Company for Macara's conduct.[1] The renewal of dissension at Surat was temporarily shelved by the sending of Macara to the Court of Golconda to negotiate for the grant of trading privileges to the French Company and the establishment of a settlement at Masulipatam. The second cause of dispute was the conduct of the Banian agent, Samson. From the picture given by Martin,[2] it seems that Samson was one of the cleverest fellows in his clever race, and had a very sound knowledge of business. But he was thoroughly dishonest and unscrupulous, and in his business transactions he always looked to his own interests rather than to those of the Company he was supposed to serve. He was, however, almost blindly supported by Caron, and it was even suspected that Caron was in league with him in his fraudulent transactions. His bitterest

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. p. 224.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 224-26.

enemies were Macara and de Faye, and the death of de Faye merely brought forward another enemy in the person of Goujon. There were constant bickerings between Caron and Goujon over the conduct of Samson, and two organised parties were formed among the servants of the Company, one supporting Caron and the other Goujon. It was only natural that the hostility between the two parties living in the same house would burst out some day in a violent manner, and it actually so happened in August, 1669. The cause of the incident was quite trifling. At the instigation of Samson, Caron had ordered his men to prevent by force the entry into the Company's premises of the rival Banian merchant, Odoudas (Adi Das?). As Caron's followers did their duty, with probably more zeal than discretion, the men of the other party ran to the rescue of Odoudas, and there ensued a free scuffle.[1] The situation was eased by the intervention of the two Chiefs, Caron and Goujon. But it was only a temporary truce as the two principals continued to be as hostile to each other as ever.

Controversy over Macara and Samson went on as bitterly as before. Macara, who was now at the Court of Golconda, was accused of misappropriation of a large sum of money belonging to the Company; and Caron taking it up as a splendid opportunity to discredit his old enemy, Macara, and his protector, Goujon, sent two sub-merchants, Deltor and Malfosse, to investigate into the matter. At the same time both Caron and Goujon tried to woo the two merchants of the Company, Mariage and Martin, and bring them over to their sides. In order to prove the innocence of Samson, Caron even proposed to appoint Mariage and Martin as

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 228-29.

examiners of the accounts of the agent. But the latter were too clever and saw through the game. They refused to join either party and decided to maintain an attitude of strict neutrality.[1]

When two hostile and well-organised parties stood face to face, the slightest thing, even the merest suspicion was sufficient to kindle the fire; and so it happened in December, 1669. As two ships of the Company, *La Marie* and *La Force*, lay ready at Surat to sail for France, a rumour spread quickly that Caron intended to send back to France on board these ships the members of the opposing party, and the suspicion was sought to be confirmed by the sudden appearance of thirty to forty well-armed sailors in the settlement. It was immediately taken to be an indication that in case of opposition to his plan Caron intended to employ violence, and it drove the other party to rush to arms and prepare for resistance. In the end, however, a bloody encounter was averted by the assurance of Caron that he had no design either to send his enemies back to France or to employ violence for the purpose.[2] But bad blood continued and burst forth again in January, 1670, when a member of Goujon's party was assaulted by some men belonging to the other party. There was again an apprehension of an armed clash which was again averted by a temporary pacification.[3]

In spite of his assurance of December, 1669, Caron, determined to be rid of all opposition, sent out most of his enemies to far distant places, some to the Malabar coast, some to Basra and some to the eastern coast of Africa. The persons concerned knew very well why

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 233-36.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 240-41.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 242.

they were being sent, but the obligations of service compelled them to obey. In March, 1670, there arrived letters from France, from the king, Colbert and the *Chambre Générale*, which confirmed the position of Caron all the more as the sole authority in India. The proceedings of the *Conseil Souverain* at Fort Dauphin regarding the Macara episode were quashed and the position of Caron was thus vindicated.[1] Moreover, both the ministry and the Company expressed their full confidence in the Director. The other party was for the time being completely routed, but it did not at all help in restoring peace in the settlement. Caron, fortified by the letters from France, now set about establishing his supreme authority. The merchant, Mariage, who had so long maintained a neutral attitude was won over by the offer of a membership of the Council and a higher salary. The next step was to send the principal enemy, Goujon, and the refractory merchant, Martin, to Golconda and Masulipatam. The apparent intention was to investigate into the affairs of Macara and to restore order in the settlement at Masulipatam; but the real aim was to get rid of these two troublesome elements who might dispute the sole authority of the Director, Caron. We are not concerned with the details of the Macara affair. Suffice it to know that Macara refused to render accounts and was arrested, which led to some trouble with the Muhammedan Governor of Masulipatam who took the side of the Armenian. In the end Macara was forcibly seized and sent back to France. What concerns us here is the sudden death of Goujon at Masulipatam on the 28th September, 1670.[2] He was undoubtedly a loyal and conscientious servant of the

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 245-46.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 280.

Company, but his excessive zeal and indiscretion were his ruin. He died of a broken heart at the blind approval of the Company of everything that Caron did. Goujon was succeeded by Martin, who now became the Chief of the settlement at Masulipatam.

With Goujon dead, Caron could now feel more secure. Moreover, in November, 1670, he received fresh letters from the Court and the Company which gave him all the satisfaction he could wish for. The authorities in France were so much convinced that he was the only person capable of establishing and extending French trade in the East that, as Martin says, they even "authorised his wicked conduct." [1] The letters which he now received from France confirmed him in the power which he had tacitly assumed already to govern everything with sole authority and according to his own fancy, and there was nobody at the time at Surat who could oppose him.

Thus fully confirmed in his supreme position, Caron next undertook a venture which he had been contemplating for a long time, namely, a voyage to Bantam. Martin states in his diary, dated April, 1670, that he had been shown a long time back a letter which Caron had written to the *Chambre Générale* about a project to go to Bantam; [2] so that Caron probably conceived the plan in 1669. There were three principal reasons for the Bantam project. First, Bantam was an important centre for the trade in spices, then almost entirely in the hands of the Dutch. Caron, therefore, wished to establish a French settlement there and to compete directly with the Dutch. Second, Caron knew that the king of Bantam was ill-disposed towards

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*, I, p. 292.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 250.

the Dutch, and thus it would be easier to conclude a political alliance with him, which would secure French interests in the trade of the Spice Islands. Third, Caron was still smarting under his personal grievance against the Dutch Company. By going to Bantam he wished to show to the Dutch that he, who had been neglected by them, had come back to the gates of their capital in the East Indies as the head of another strong rival European Company. Leaving Mariage as the Chief at Surat, Caron started for Bantam in May, 1671, with three ships. He remained there for a few months and did not return to Surat till November. Details about the results of the enterprise do not concern us here. It is sufficient to know that Caron established a French settlement at Bantam, and left there three merchants at the head of affairs, which later led to great disorder as was only to be expected.[1] But what was more important is that he concluded a treaty with the king of Bantam, and in exchange for the grant of trading rights and privileges to the French Company he assured the king of the protection of the French against the tyranny of the Dutch.[2] The French naval squadron was already on its way to India and Caron was probably thinking in his mind to take it to Bantam. But, as will be described later, circumstances turned the squadron away to some other enterprise which proved more fatal in the end to the interests of the French Company. However, we are anticipating events, and let us now turn back and see the appointment of several other Directors who were to share control with Caron over the affairs of the Company in India.

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*, I, pp. 297-98.

2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 289.

### 6. *Appointment of New Directors*

In spite of their apparently blind confidence in their Director in India, Caron, the authorities in France could not easily set aside the strong representations made to them by the opposition party at Surat. After the death of de Faye the opposition was led by Goujon, Joubert, and Père Ambroise. They sent one of them, Joubert, to France in 1670, to complain against the conduct of Caron and to inform the Company about the state of disorder in the Surat settlement due to Caron's handling of affairs.[1] Joubert was successful in convincing the authorities about the bad effects of placing all powers in the hands of a single person. The result was that Caron was no longer to be in sole authority, and it was decided to send out three more Directors to Surat. Baron, who was formerly a Consul at Aleppo and had a great knowledge about the East, was nominated by Colbert himself to be one of the Directors, and the other two Directors chosen by the Company were Blot and Gueston. Baron was the first to be sent out, and he arrived in India in June, 1671.[2] Blot arrived in November,[3] and Gueston a few months later, after Caron and de la Haye had left Surat. It is rather difficult to understand the policy of the authorities in France. Even as late as November, 1670, Caron had received letters from Colbert and the Company expressing their full confidence in him, while soon after they decided to send out some more Directors to India. Probably they realised that Caron should not be left in sole authority which had led to such great disorder in

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 90.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 299.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 307.

the Surat settlement, and the letters they wrote to him were meant merely to humour the man whom they regarded as indispensable, since he possessed the greatest knowledge and experience of Eastern affairs. In any case, by placing at the head of affairs in India several Directors, the Company committed a grave mistake. The intention was to restore peace and order but the result was just the opposite, as it was bound to be, since it divided the command in stead of concentrating it in the same hands and thus gave rise to that jealousy and rivalry which led to the ruin of the French Company in India. What was particularly unfortunate was that the new Directors seemed to have come from France with a deep-seated prejudice against Caron, and with too high an opinion about their own abilities. Baron, of course, having been a Consul at Aleppo for a long time, had a great knowledge about Eastern affairs. He was very honest and sincere, and of a gentle and accommodating nature. But he was extremely prejudiced against Caron and his very good nature allowed him to be influenced and controlled by Blot. This latter was a prosperous merchant at Lyons and had a thorough and practical knowledge of business. He was undoubtedly very capable and intelligent, but he had absolutely no experience of Eastern affairs. He was of an egoistical temperament and regarded himself as the only person who could set matters right. One may find a curious parallel to this appointment of French Directors in the appointment of Councillors to the Governor-General by the English East India Company after the passing of North's Regulating Act in 1773.

## 7. *Caron's Return from Bantam*

Caron came back from Bantam in November, 1671. On his return to Surat he found there the two newly arrived Directors, Baron and Blot, as well as de la Haye with his squadron. It would seem that there was now a good opportunity for the French Company to push on vigorously with its projects, with the two newly arrived Directors carrying on their work at Surat and Caron conducting the naval squadron to where it was needed. But the same old factors, jealousy and rivalry, appeared again and ruined all prospects of any concerted action. However, before we go into the details of the recurrence of internal discord, let us notice first a few other things of less importance.

On Caron's return from Bantam, he was received with all possible honour by de la Haye. The latter decorated him with the ribbon of the Order of St. Michael on behalf of the king "in recognition of his good services, and as an evidence of the confidence that his Majesty had in his conduct of the glorious enterprises he had projected in the richest countries of the Indies."[1] The ceremony, conducted by de la Haye and Père Ambroise, was a magnificent one, with all the officers of the squadron present and with the firing of salutes from the ships, followed by a great feast given by the new *Chevalier*. The other Director, Blot, was conspicuous by his absence, although he was specially invited and the ceremony postponed for one day to suit his convenience. It was only inspired by jealousy and did not tend to improve matters between him and Caron.

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 269.

During the stay of the squadron in the Swally Bay there was some trouble with the English over the question of saluting the French flag,[1] but things were easily smoothened and nothing serious took place.

The Mughal Governor of Surat sent his compliments to de la Haye who immediately reciprocated them. There was at first some trouble with the customs authorities, but upon a strong representation made to the Governor, he ordered the customs officers not to make any demands upon the officers of the French squadron for fear of an attack on the fortress.[2] The latter were henceforward at liberty to pass undisturbed to and from the town.

### 8. *Internal Discord in the French Settlement at Surat*

From the moment of his arrival at Surat Blot began to behave in a very haughty manner, opposing every measure adopted before and almost everybody belonging to the former regime, from Caron down to the meanest employee. It seems that he came out from France with extremely biased views, that the state of things at Surat was hopelessly rotten, that every servant of the Company there was thoroughly dishonest and untrustworthy, and that he was the only person who could set matters right. It is not unlikely, as Martin just hints, that Blot had secret instructions from the authorities in France to behave in the manner he did.[3] There is no definite evidence about it, but if it be true, the Company certainly followed a very strange policy. However, whether he acted on his own or upon instructions from higher authorities, from the very beginning

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*, I, p. 318.
2 *Ibid.*
3 *Ibid.*, p. 316.

Blot behaved in a rude manner with all the employees in the settlement, without any exception.

Blot quarrelled violently with de la Haye also. There were two reasons for it. First, he had not been informed at all about the projects on which the squadron was to be employed, and he was therefore vehemently opposed to helping the squadron with money or ships of the Company. Second, de la Haye appeared to him to be a partisan of Caron. He had shown great honour to Caron after the latter's return from Bantam, and had express orders from the king not to undertake anything except under the direction of Caron, whom he was to obey even against the resolutions of the whole Council.[1] Things went so far that de la Haye even thought of arresting Blot, from which however he was dissuaded by the saner advice of Caron. Blot, who came to know about the plot, prepared to resist, but it is extremely doubtful how far he would have succeeded if it had really come to the worst.[2]

The person whom Blot regarded as his arch-enemy was Caron. He entertained such a strong mistrust of Caron that he openly declared that he could never agree with him in any matter at all. On the other hand Caron, a man jealous of command and superiority, could never tolerate an equal which Blot claimed to be. On the ground of being the oldest servant of the Company and the most well-versed in the intricacies of Eastern trade and commerce, Caron claimed a rank of pre-eminence which Blot would not concede to him. The result was that both at the Council table and outside there were violent altercations and outbursts between the two, which only brought dishonour to the

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*, I, p. 317.
2 *Ibid.*

nation and prejudice to the affairs of the Company.[1] Caron became sulky and threatened to give up the service of the Company, to which Blot replied that he was quite capable of doing everything himself and that the affairs of the Company were not so thorny or difficult that he could not tackle them single-handed. The two rivals finally came to a point of complete separation, when they stopped meeting or communicating with each other on any affairs of the Company. Caron retired to Swally with de la Haye in order to expedite preparations for the departure of the fleet at the earliest possible moment, while the other two Directors, Blot and Baron, remained at Surat to deal with the affairs of the Company.[2]

### 9. *Decision to lead the Squadron to Ceylon*

The squadron had been sent, as we have noticed already, to help Caron in the execution of the projects he had formed for the extension of French commerce and influence in the East, and particularly for securing an independent port for the French. But as yet the schemes of Caron had not assumed any definite shape. Three projects seemed to have been floating in his mind, all offering great advantages to the French, St. Thomé on the Coromandel coast, Bantam and Ceylon. St. Thomé, very advantageously situated for the trade of the whole coast, had been long considered by the French as an attractive place for establishing an independent settlement. Bantam also offered great possibilities, and during his recent voyage there Caron had concluded a treaty of alliance with the king of that country. But the place which seemed to have all the necessary

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 94.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 269.

advantageous conditions for the establishment of a free settlement was Ceylon. Besides the valuable spices grown there, the strategic importance of the place, as a halting station for all ships going from Europe to the Far East, was very great and had been recognised by all the European nations trading in the East. The island had been captured in succession by all the nations which had established supremacy in Indian waters. At the time when Caron thought of the project, the north, south and west of the island were in the possession of the Dutch, and the east was the only part yet left unoccupied. The king of Kandy, who had formerly invited the Dutch to the island to turn out the Portuguese, was now eager to gain the alliance of the French to drive out the Dutch. The prospects for the French therefore were very good indeed. Moreover, Caron knew the island perfectly well. While in the service of the Dutch Company, he had taken part in the conquest of Ceylon. The eastern part of the island offered two valuable ports, Trinkomali and Batticaloa. Caron preferred Batticaloa which was easy to defend and had a magnificent natural harbour. For a long time he had thought of means to execute his project and had looked for an opportunity to enter into negotiations with the king of Kandy, who in his mountain retreat in the centre of the island was practically cut off on all sides by the watchful Dutch. In order to prevent any suspicion Caron had employed French Capuchin missionaries as his diplomatic agents.[1] They did their work successfully and prepared the ground well for the final coming of the French with a strong force. When therefore de la Haye arrived in

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 89.

India with his naval squadron, Caron decided to lead it to Ceylon. But it seems probable that his original idea, later changed by circumstances, was to lead the squadron, after securing the French position in Ceylon, to Bantam in order to deliver a home-thrust at the Dutch.

When, however, he proposed to the other Directors to help the squadron with money and ships of the Company, they, particularly Blot, violently opposed. They asserted that for the extension of French trade and commerce in the East there was no need of a naval squadron. Blot even declared that he had express orders from the *Chambre Générale* not to furnish anything to the squadron, or at least to furnish as little as possible.[1] That was something very strange. Blot seems to have taken up the position that the French Company was entirely different from the French Government, and that since the squadron under de la Haye had been sent by the French Government, the Company was under no obligation to help or reinforce it. It seems extremely doubtful that the *Chambre Générale* had sent out such orders. The French Company was not much separate from the French Government, which, in fact, decided all the major policies of the Company. If the king had sent out a naval squadron, it was only with the object of establishing the Company in a stronger position in the East, and it was therefore reasonable to expect that the Company should help the squadron by all possible means. What really induced Blot to refuse all assistance to the squadron was the fact that it had been sent out from France at the wishes of Caron and in order to help the

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*, I. p. 316.

execution of the projects which Caron had formed. Moreover, Caron had at first refused to disclose any of his projects to Blot, who naturally claimed that being a Director he must be kept fully informed about the projects on which the money and ships of the Company demanded of him were to be employed.[1] In fairness to Blot, it must be admitted that he was quite justified in making this claim.

After several stormy meetings of the Council a compromise was at last effected mainly through the good offices of Baron. It was resolved to help the squadron with two ships of the Company, *Le Phénix* and *Le St. Jean de Baptiste*, which were well-armed and furnished with all necessary things. A considerable sum of money was also entrusted to Caron for part of the expenses of the naval expedition.

In the midst of these internal quarrels among the Directors the position of de la Haye was rather anomalous. He was the commander of the naval squadron, but the squadron had been sent out for the service of the Company, and de la Haye was therefore completely subordinated to the Company's Directors at Surat. He had orders to carry out the wishes of the Directors even against his own judgment. His instructions were, "*Sa Majesté estime si necessaire d'agir de concert avec les directeurs et même d'exécuter tout ce qu'ils jugeront a propos, que quand même le dit sieur de la Haye connaitrait qu'il ferait mal, après leur avoir représenté ses raisons, elle desire qu'il suivre ponctullement leurs sentiments.*"[2] (His Majesty deems it so necessary to work in accord with the Direc-

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 317.

[2] Clément—*Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Colbert*, Vol. III, p. 470.

tors and even to execute all that they think proper, that even when the said Sieur de la Haye knew that it would do ill, he (his Majesty) desires that after having represented to them his views, he (de la Haye) should strictly follow their judgment). It was specially unfortunate that the person in command of the fleet should have been fettered in his judgment and action in this manner. The French Government and the Company should have kept two things separate as far as possible, first, the needs of the Company, and second, the military and naval aspect of the expedition. To subordinate the latter completely to the former was to foredoom the expedition to a disastrous failure with its inevitably adverse reaction on the interests of the Company itself. In his bitterness against the Directors de la Haye wrote to Colbert that the Directors should be subordinated to the army chiefs in everything not connected with trade and commerce.[1] If this had been done from the very beginning, much of the disorder and confusion at Surat could have been avoided and the expedition would have had a greater chance of success. But as it was, de la Haye met with an attitude of non-co-operation from two of the Directors, Blot and Baron. Even after the Council had resolved to help the squadron with money and ships of the Company, de la Haye met with the greatest difficulty from the Directors regarding the supply of necessary articles for repairing his ships, which in the end he was compelled to buy from the Dutch and the English.[2] Abbé Carré seems to have overlooked this difficulty of de la Haye when he says that in spite of Caron's advice to stock food provisions on board the ships for a year, he procured sup-

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 94.
2 *Ibid.*

plies only for four or five months.[1] But it seems that the responsibility for this blunder, which was to cost the squadron so dear, did not lie so much with de la Haye as with the Directors, who put every difficulty in his way in procuring supplies and provisions for his fleet.

After all these squabbles and prolonged delay the fleet sailed from Swally on the 5th January, 1672.[2] Caron accompanied it on board the Company's ship, *Le St. Jean de Baptiste*. It was, in fact, his final departure from the settlement which he himself had created. After the failure of the Ceylon enterprise he decided to go to France to render an account of his administration in India and to complain against the insults and injustices he had received from the other Directors.[3] But even before his departure from Surat he had threatened to give up completely the service of the Company and never to return to India because of the opposition he had to encounter in all his plans and designs from the new Directors sent out to him from France. It was undoubtedly a great loss to the French Company. Caron had the greatest experience about Eastern affairs, and he had already given ample proof of his ability and enterprising capacity. But to retain him it was necessary to give him absolute command in everything. A haughty and arrogant man as he was, he could not tolerate any equal, nor could he suffer the glory and honour of a successful enterprise being shared with him by others. He was extremely sensitive on the point of power and pre-eminence, and in a private

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 270.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 271. But Martin gives the date as 20th January; see Mémoires, I, p. 319.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

conversation with Abbé Carré he said that it was the only thing which had made him give up the service and interests of his own country, Holland.[1] Later on he was accused of planning treachery against the French. But here we see the real motive behind his conduct, that he was guided only by his own personal interest and an intense love of power.

### *10. Continuation of the State of Disorder at Surat*

Before following the fortunes of the fleet after its departure from Surat, let us notice here briefly the continuation of the state of disorder in the French settlement. The thing is of some importance, and though a narration of the petty squabbles and minor disputes among the Directors of the Company might tax the patience of some readers, it nevertheless provides us with a necessary background for our main theme, the first serious attempt of the French to obtain a firm foothold in India. From that point of view, the internal discords at Surat are of not a little interest, as showing the circumstances through which the attempt was made and providing us with one of the principal factors responsible for the failure of that attempt.

After the departure of Caron from Surat the two other Directors, Blot and Baron, worked in good accord, which was possible only because Baron was of a gentle and accommodating nature and allowed Blot to have his own way in everything. Blot worked with a zeal and devotion which made him loved and feared at the same time by everybody. By his own example he

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 271.

made all his subordinate officers discharge their duties honestly and conscientiously. For a time it seemed that a new and happier era was beginning to dawn, but things changed completely after the arrival of the third Director-General, Gueston, a few months later on board the ship, *Le St. Esprit*.[1] Before their departure from France Blot and Gueston had been great friends and they remained so for sometime after the arrival of Gueston at Surat. But the old friendship soon cooled down in the new atmosphere, and petty differences between the two later turned into violent quarrels. There were two main factors which caused this breach between the two. First, there was a great difference in temperament. Gueston was in the habit of allowing things to drag on for a long time and he often attached great importance to minor and insignificant points, while Blot was just the reverse and liked to push things on with the greatest expedience possible.[2] The second factor was the love of power and supremacy. There were frequent quarrels between Gueston and Blot over their respective powers and capacities, each one trying to assume a superior position which the other would violently oppose.[3] The first open quarrel broke out over the loss of the ship *Le St. Esprit*, for which Blot most unreasonably held Gueston responsible.[2] This gave the signal for a declaration of open war in which the two publicly denounced each other in the most violent terms. Baron, a friend of peace, tried his best to appease passions on both sides, but with little success. The subordinate officers in the settlement were also very

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 307, 332.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 375.
[3] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 94.

much embarrassed and did not know how to conduct themselves with regard to these two Directors. Each of them would regard himself as being slighted and would therefore be very much offended if any of the subordinate officers went to the other first to hand over some letters or to get some orders signed. As a result the affairs of the French Company fell again into great disorder, which delighted the English and the Dutch, and helped the ruin of French trade and commerce by producing a bad impression upon the local merchants, who quite reasonably concluded that if the Chiefs of the same Company could not agree between themselves, they would be the less able to respect the feelings of foreigners whom they hardly knew yet.

When things were in this state Blot suddenly died on the 24th August, 1672.[1] Gueston was now left in supreme authority at Surat which he exercised freely without any fear of opposition, the only other Director, Baron, being a man very gentle and opposed to all discords. Gueston reversed all the policies and orders of Blot just as the latter had done after the departure of Caron. In matters of pure business Gueston had not half the ability of Blot, and his conduct of affairs did little good to the trade and commerce of the French Company. But he was a good administrator and restored perfect order and discipline among the employees of the settlement. There were naturally murmurs of discontent against this rigid policy of Gueston, and Abbé Carré gives us a good picture of the state of

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*, I, p. 376. But Abbé Carré states that Blot died in October; see *Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 95. Abbé Carré was at Surat from the 2nd to the 19th November, 1672; see pages 93 and 110.

things in the Surat settlement which he visited in November, 1672. But, as he says himself, the disease had gone too deep and only the most severe measures could check it.[1]

Let us now leave this matter, to which we shall come back later, and follow the course of events during the voyage of the Royal squadron to Ceylon.

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[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 96.

# CHAPTER IV

## Voyage Down the Malabar Coast

1. Prospects of success of the expedition. 2. Voyage to Goa. 3. The Fleet at Goa. 4. Treaty with the Zamorin of Calicut. 5. Occupation of Alicot. 6. Encounter with the Dutch Fleet 7. Arrival of the squadron in Ceylonese waters.

### *1. Prospects of success of the expedition*

France had sent out a powerful naval squadron to the Eastern waters and with such a formidable weapon she might have struck for power. But for that it was necessary to act with promptitude, to strike a great blow without any loss of time. Time was the most valuable factor for success in the expedition, but unfortunately those in charge of the squadron completely ignored it. The fleet started from La Rochelle in March, 1670. It reached Fort Dauphin in October. It left the island in July, 1671, and arrived at Surat at the end of September. At Surat it was again delayed for three months and started on its expedition to Ceylon in January, 1672, nearly two years from the time of its departure from France. As will be described later, even after starting from Surat it made needlessly prolonged delays on the way. It is really surprising to see the manner in which the expedition was conducted, and the ultimate failure was not in the least undeserved. Besides this loss of time, the squadron was considerably weakened by losses in man-power also. We have noticed the events in Madagascar. At Surat also a number of men deserted and took refuge among the Portuguese and the Muham-

medans. In spite of these losses, however, the squadron was still a formidable striking force. Its ships were all in good condition, and at the time of sailing from Surat it was re-inforced by two ships of the Company, *Le Phénix* and *Le St. Jean de Baptiste*. If the expedition had been conducted with vigour and determination, the squadron might still have achieved some tangible success. But unfortunately that was not to be. Lack of foresight, indecision, irresoluteness and want of sense of responsibility proved to be the ruin of this grand fleet on which so much hopes had been pinned.

## 2. *Voyage to Goa*

After sailing from Surat the squadron stopped before the Portuguese town of Daman where some of the vessels anchored. The Governor of the town sent his compliments to de la Haye with some presents. It was however not because of any friendliness on the part of the Portuguese, but in order to induce de la Haye to leave the place at the earliest possible moment. Abbé Carré describes the attitude of secret jealousy and hostility of the Portuguese Governor of Daman against the French.[1]

The squadron did not stay long at Daman, but resumed its voyage down the coast of Malabar. De la Haye reconnoitred all the ports, bays, creeks and mouths of rivers on the way, and he often made these explorations himself in a small boat. He visited Danda-Rajapur, Karanja, Jaitapur and Kharepatan and made careful explorations on the coast without however giving any cause for suspicion to the Portu-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 111.

guese or to the local rulers. On the way the squadron met a Company's ship, *Le St. Francois*, returning from Bantam with a rich cargo of pepper.

### 3. *The fleet at Goa*

Before reaching Goa with the whole fleet de la Haye sent in advance one of his ships, *Le Flamand*, with some officers on board to render compliments to the Portuguese Viceroy and to ask his permission to procure provisions for the squadron from the town. The officers were successful in their mission, and when the squadron arrived later they informed de la Haye that the French were welcome at Goa and were at liberty to procure all that they needed there. On the next day a Portuguese officer came to render compliments to de la Haye on behalf of the Viceroy, who was at the time residing in the fort of Aguada situated at the north of the entrance to the river. De la Haye also expressed a desire to see the Viceroy, but incognito, in order to avoid all formal ceremonies. The Portuguese officer informed the Viceroy about this, and the latter readily agreed to the condition. Following that, de la Haye accompanied by Caron landed at night and was very cordially received by the Portuguese Viceroy. It is not known definitely what passed at this interview. Even Martin who is usually very informative is silent on this matter. Speculators spoke of some important projects resulting from this meeting, but even if they be true they did not materialise. Some expressed the view that the meeting was a diplomatic move on the part of de la Haye who wanted to rouse the jealousy of the Dutch.[1] But we

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 322.

cannot be quite definite about it. On the one hand, it might have been thought feasible to form an alliance or understanding between the French and the Portuguese against their common enemy in the East, the Dutch. On the other hand, the suspicious and hostile attitude of the Portuguese at the arrival of the French fleet in Indian waters prevented any good understanding between them. De la Haye was polite towards the Portuguese Viceroy as he wanted to procure provisions for his squadron at Goa, and the latter showed a friendly attitude towards the French merely to mask his secret and underhand tactics to weaken their fleet, as will be described presently. Although the projects of the French Company for the extension of its trade and influence in the East did not in any way seriously clash with the interests of the Portuguese, jealousy and suspicion on the part of the latter prevented any real union of interests, which would certainly have been very much helpful to both the nations in their competition against the Dutch and the English. But combination was not possible among the European nations in India, as each of them wanted to have all the advantages to the exclusion of others. However, though nothing important came out of this interview between de la Haye and the Portuguese Viceroy, for the time being both of them gained their objects. The French procured considerable quantities of provisions for their squadron, and the Portuguese were successful in weakening the squadron both in money and in manpower by inducing the French to make reckless expenses and pursuading a large number of them to desert from the service of their nation.

The French stayed at Goa for a much longer period than was reasonably necessary to exchange compliments

and to procure provisions for their fleet. Their inborn love of pomp and lavish display re-asserted itself at this moment, much to their own cost. They were eager to show the magnificence and splendour of their nation in this great and formerly the mistress city of the East. There was a needless ostentation of gun-salutes from the French fleet. Frenchmen of all ranks showed off in the streets of Goa their smart dresses and the rich embellishments on their coats and arms. They spent enormous amounts on feasting and merry-making. The officers made a grand show and even the ordinary soldiers and sailors did not lag behind. "When they came ashore, the citizens of Goa seeing them smart, clean, well-dressed, with the moustaches held up and the swords by the side, marching in a proud manner, took them for French *noblesse*, not being able to imagine that soldiers and sailors could even wear beautiful shirts, stockings well tucked up and pretty shoes, because their own soldiers ordinarily went dressed in a manner which excited more pity than fear."[1] The Portuguese also, being a nation equally fond of pomp and show above all things, were jealous at the magnificence and display of the French, and tried their best to show themselves at least equal to the Frenchmen of their respective ranks. There was not a Portuguese at Goa who did not spend his all including the advance of several months' wages in order to compete with the French on equal terms. The Portuguese 'fidalgues' displayed a wonderful magnificence in their dresses, in the ornamentations of their palanquins and in the lavish feasts they gave in honour of the Frenchmen of their rank. There were similarly ex-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 273.

changes of visits, feasts and concert parties among the French and Portuguese naval and military officers, who vied with one another with the characteristic reckless bravado of their nations. Even the ordinary Portuguese soldiers and sailors did their best to appear at least equal to the French of their rank. Goa, whose early days of splendour had long been buried in oblivion, experienced again a little of its former pomp and magnificence upon the arrival of the French squadron. The streets were decorated with vine branches, and there was a spectacular show of ornamented palanquins, richly harnessed horses and great retinues of slaves who attended the visits, promenades and socials of the Portuguese hosts and their French guests. The palace of the Viceroy and the beautiful mansions of the principal Portuguese citizens were adorned with all that there was of the richest and the most magnificent in the East. Even the houses of the bourgeois, the artisans and the common people were not left out from this general decoration. Goa seemed to have come back for a moment to the best period of its once glorious days.

But all these magnificence and splendid displays had the indirect effect of considerably weakening the French squadron. Without knowing it themselves, the French by their lavish and reckless expenses enriched Goa immeasurably at their own cost. The inhabitants of Goa, long reduced to a state of almost abject poverty, were staggered at the sight of people whose only desire was to make lavish and reckless expenses. They hastened to compete with one another to receive these Frenchmen in their houses and to supply them with all that they wished for, catering even to their base and voluptuous passions. "So

that those who had some Portuguese wine grew rich within a short time; the bakers, the fruiterers and the confectioners became quite well off. But specially those who had human merchandise, with which this town is full, plied their business wonderfully well. So that our squadron enriched in a short time this town, which for a long while had not seen such delightful, magnificent and free people."[1] The needlessly long stay at Goa afforded undoubtedly a pleasant diversion to the French, but unfortunately those in authority failed to realise that it was much too expensive a diversion.

The show of splendid reception and magnificent hospitality on the part of the Portuguese was not so much spontaneous or prompted by private interests as the result of a subtle and underhand policy of the Portuguese Viceroy. His natural jealousy against the French was heightened by the assumption of the title of Viceroy by de la Haye. He could never tolerate the idea that there could be another rival European Viceroy in India. Being powerless to offer any open opposition to the French, he resorted to secret and underhand tactics to weaken their fleet as much as possible in men and money. The arrival of the French squadron at Goa gave him an opportunity which he was too politic to miss. He sent out orders to his officers to render all possible civility and courtesy to the Frenchmen who came ashore to visit the town and the pleasure spots in the suburbs. He also ordered that food and other things should always be kept ready and sold to the French whenever they needed them. But under this beautiful appearance of friendship and

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 273.

courtesy the Portuguese Viceroy had really hatched a secret plot against the French. Calling to his side his best and most faithful agents, he ordered them to be present at all the celebrations, promenades and diversions of the French, so as to induce them to make reckless expenses, and by means of fair promises and attractive offers to attempt to draw them to the service of the Portuguese.[1] In this task they succeeded admirably well. The French made lavish expenses without troubling themselves about the future, and many of them, after having thus squandered their all, were glad to find refuge among the Portuguese who cleverly supplied them with the means to prolong for a few days more their delightful life at the expense of their liberty. Even before this, when the French squadron was at Surat the Viceroy of Goa had sent there some of his trusty agents who did their work so well that in a short while they filled the towns of Daman, Tarapur, Bassein, Chaul and other places under Portuguese rule with a large number of French deserters. When the squadron left Goa there remained a sufficient number of Frenchmen there to form two companies, which the Portuguese utilised in their expeditions to the Persian Gulf and elsewhere. The net results of the prolonged stay of the French fleet at Goa were, first, a very considerable loss of its personnel which served to re-inforce the Portuguese, and second, a needless waste of money which weakened the squadron and greatly affected the prospects of the expedition on which it had started.

While at Goa the French squadron received a re-inforcement of three ships from France, one king's ship, *Le Grand Breton*, and two flutes (large, narrow-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 274. He says that he came to know about these secret plans from some of the agents themselves.

sterned Dutch cargo boats used in the seventeenth century), *Le St. Denis* and *Le Barbet*.[1] *Le Grand Breton* had started from France in 1671 and anchored at Goa on the 25th January, 1672. *Le Barbet*, which had also started from France with the first ship, was separated from it on the way and was forced to anchor in the roadstead of Colombo to take in provisions of water and wood. The Governor-General of the Dutch occupied places in Ceylon, Rijcklof van Goens, gave orders to one of the Dutch ships to carry wood, water and other necessary things to the French ship. It was not at all a gesture of friendship on the part of the Dutch, but was done only to prevent the French from setting foot on the island. From Colombo the ship came to Goa where she joined the French squadron. The third ship also had started from France in 1671 and met the squadron at Goa. All the ships were in very good condition and carried considerable reinforcements in men, money and munitions, and also letters from the Court for de la Haye.

### 4. *Treaty with the Zamorin of Calicut*

On the 1st February, 1672, the squadron sailed from Goa, quite oblivious of the tremendous loss it had suffered during its stay in the Portuguese port. The ship *Le Phénix* was sent in advance to Tellicherry where the French Company had a settlement, and the rest of the squadron arrived there a few days later. De Flacourt, the Chief of the settlement, came on board the Admiral ship and informed de la Haye

1 Abbé Carré mentions only the first two ships. He probably did not know about the arrival of *Le Barbet*;—see p. 272. But Martin mentions it;—see *Mémoires*, I, p. 323.

about the great eagerness of the Zamorin of Calicut to seek the alliance of the French against the Dutch who had given affronts to him on several occasions. De la Haye also learnt that the Zamorin was then at Paniany, only a short distance to the south of Tellicherry, celebrating one of the customary annual festivals.[1]

The squadron arrived and anchored at Paniany on the 12th February, 1672. The Zamorin was informed about the arrival of the French squadron, and on the next day two Royal Princes came on board the Admiral ship.[2] They were very cordially received and magnificently entertained, and on their side they were also lavish in their promises to the French. It is not clear what passed between the French and the Royal Princes of Calicut at this interview. Only this much can be said with certainty that the Zamorin, who was very hostile to the Dutch for having taken possession of some of the most important places in his dominions and for their haughty behaviour towards him, was very anxious to gain the alliance of the French to drive out the Dutch. A treaty was naturally concluded, but we have to accept with some reservation the statement of Abbé Carré that the Zamorin placed his whole kingdom under the protection of the Great King of France.[3] However, there were two tangible results of the treaty. The first was the cession to the French Company of Alicot, situated in a very pleasant and fertile countryside, with a good river and a port convenient for the trade in spices which were grown abundantly in the

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 323.

2 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 96 (where the visit is graphically described).

3 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 275.

surrounding territory. This place which was very near Cranganore had already been ceded to the French Company some time back, but was actually in the possession of the Dutch. At a meeting between Caron and the Zamorin the cession of Alicot was finally ratified.[1] The second result was that a clerk of the Company, Coche, was left at the Court of the Zamorin as the French agent. The Zamorin had expected more, but de la Haye and Caron, who had other projects in their minds, only made some fair promises for the future. They were not willing for the present to entangle themselves in the affairs of the Zamorin.

### 5. *Occupation of Alicot*

After the ratification of the treaty the squadron resumed its voyage and anchored at a place between Cranganore and Alicot. De la Haye wrote to van Rée, the Dutch Governor of Cranganore, complaining against the unjust usurpation by the Dutch of Alicot which had been ceded by the Zamorin to the French Company, and asking the Dutch to withdraw from the place so that the French might take possession of it. After an insulting reply from van Rée, de la Haye decided on action and sent a strong force to attack Alicot. The Dutch withdrew in face of the strong French force and the latter easily took possession of the place. The settlement consisted of a thatched house only, surrounded by a stone wall which was pulled down by de la Haye, who wanted to show thereby that his intention was not to fortify the place but only to occupy it for peaceful trade and commerce. There was one

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, 1, p. 324.

unfortunate incident. The Dutch had set fire to the thatched roof before retiring and the whole house was burnt to ashes.[1] Having left orders to de Flacourt to take charge of the place, de la Haye went back to his squadron which resumed its voyage on the 19th (Feb.). In spite, however, of this temporary military success, the Alicot enterprise as well as the other plans for the establishment of the French on the Malabar coast achieved little success. The Dutch were much too strong there and were in possession of some of the most important places on the coast. Moreover, de la Haye's action at Alicot was a mere desultory attack. He could not stay longer on the Malabar coast, being pressed by other and more important projects.

### 6. *Encounter with the Dutch Fleet*

On the 20th February (1672) when the French squadron was near Cape Comorin it met a Dutch fleet of twelve ships proceeding closely up the coast. This fleet had been equipped in Ceylon and had been sent to the Malabar coast to watch the movements of the French squadron. For a naval action all the possible advantages lay with the French. Abbé Carré states that he was told by a person who was with the Dutch fleet that there was great consternation among the Dutch at the sight of the French fleet. They knew that the French fleet was much superior to their own in personnel and artillery, and being pressed between the coast and the French fleet they almost believed themselves to be lost.[2] De la Haye immediately called a council of war to decide what to do. He himself

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 324.
[2] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 275.

and all the officers of the squadron were unanimous in their desire to attack the Dutch fleet. But Caron vigorously opposed, and de la Haye, who, as we have noticed already, had express orders to obey him implicitly, had no other alternative but to allow the Dutch fleet to proceed unmolested. Some of the ships which had advanced very close to the Dutch fleet, assuming that hostilities would be begun, were signalled to come back, and in order to prevent any sort of clash the French fleet proceeded even further out to the open sea. This action naturally created considerable discontent and murmurs among the officers and men of the French squadron, who declared loudly that they were going against the express orders of the king to compel all the ships they would find in Indian waters to salute the French flag. They went so far as to give open expression to their feelings of deep anger at the conduct of the Director, Caron, who had by his single-handed opposition prevented a conflict with the Dutch, which seemed to all appearances to have resulted in a glorious success for the French.

For this rather strange conduct Caron had been accused of treachery. Whether the charge be true or not, this much can be said definitely that even if the accusation of a deliberately traitorous conduct cannot be proved against him, he was certainly guilty of a seriously wrong judgment of the situation. Let us examine carefully the arguments he put forward before the war council opposing the declaration of hostilities against the Dutch. First, there was no valid excuse to attack the Dutch since the French were yet at peace with them. Second, the Dutch were much too strong in the East. He agreed that it was not difficult for the French squadron to defeat and destroy this parti-

cular Dutch fleet, but that would not be the end of the affair. The Dutch forces were hydra-headed and the destruction of one fleet would be followed by the despatch of many others. Third, the Dutch fleet might be defeated, but in the course of the fighting some damage was sure to be inflicted upon the French fleet, which might prevent or delay the execution of the enterprise on which it had started.[1] Let us now take up the points one by one. First, it is true that outwardly the French were at peace with the Dutch, but the shadow of war had already been looming large in Europe, and in the East the Dutch were making open preparations for a conflict with the French. They hardly concealed their hostile attitude towards their new rival. Even if a more valid reason was needed for starting open hostilities against the Dutch, that could easily have been found over the question of saluting the French flag. De la Haye had express orders from the king to compel every ship found in any part of the Indian waters to salute the Royal flag of France,[2] and he had even followed these orders with respect to an English ship during the stay of the squadron at Surat, which, as has been noticed already, led to some trouble with the English. On the other hand, the Dutch would certainly have opposed this insult and token of submission, particularly when they also had express orders from their Council at Batavia not to salute the flag of any other nation. Here then was a plausible pretext to open hostilities if the French had wanted to. Second, Caron had certainly drawn an exaggerated picture of the Dutch strength in the East. It is true that the destruction

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 325-26.
[2] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 275.

of this one fleet would not have completely ruined their Company in the Indies, but it is certain that the Dutch did not have at the time considerable forces in the East, either because they had neglected to bring soldiers from Europe or because they believed that there was nothing to fear. Martin is quite definite on this point on the strength of some documentary evidence, which later fell into his hands.[1] If their first fleet had been completely destroyed it would have considerably weakened them, and would have made it extremely difficult for them to equip another strong fleet against the French unless they completely withdrew their garrisons from all the places they held. It is true that in the long run this single naval fight would not have finally decided the issue between the French and the Dutch, but very often important results emerge from small incidents, and who knows what course future events would have taken if the French had completely annihilated the Dutch fleet at this time? Third, the argument of Caron, that the French squadron, which had been sent to India to help the extension of French trade and commerce, should avoid any conflict with the Dutch lest that would hamper its mission, was based on the entirely wrong assumption that the French would be allowed to execute their projects without encountering open opposition from others. Caron, a very intelligent and shrewd man as he was, should have realised from the very beginning that the Dutch would surely resist any encroachment of the French on places which were either under their domination or claimed to be in their vague sphere of influence. The French projects with regard to Ceylon and Bantam had absolutely no prospect

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 326.

of success without a conflict with the Dutch. That was as clear as day. Now the only question is, assuming that a conflict with the Dutch was inevitable, was that the proper moment for the French to attack? The answer is, it was certainly the most opportune moment for them. They had the advantage of a navy superior both in man-power and in artillery, and they also had the added advantage of a superior strategic position.

There was one immediate result of this timid policy of the French. The Dutch turned the incident to their own glory and to the dishonour of the French by spreading the rumour that the mighty squadron of the king of France had fled away before their fleet, not daring to demand any salute to its flag.[1] It created a great impression on all and nullified to a large extent the first effect produced by the appearance of the formidable French naval squadron in Indian waters.

The blunderous policy of the French might have been avoided if there had not been a very unfortunate accident, which is one more example to show how small and trifling incidents affect the course of events in history and sometimes give it an entirely different turn. In a letter, dated June 20, 1671, the king of France authorised de la Haye to commence hostilities against the Dutch on the first favourable occasion, but the letter was not received till July 15, 1672.[2] The person responsible for this undue delay was Director Blot. Soon after the departure of the squadron from Surat, there arrived this letter as well as others from the Court for de la Haye, informing him about the preparations for war against the Dutch in Europe and assuring him that war would be declared at the beginning of the year

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 276.
[2] Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Française avant Dupleix*, p. 97.

1672. He was also authorised to begin hostilities in the East at the first favourable opportunity. The letters were sent by boat to Goa where the French squadron was expected to be at the time. In spite of the warnings of others about the danger from Malabar corsairs Blot did not provide the boat with sufficient guards, nor did he tell the boat's captain expressly that there were some very important letters for de la Haye. As was feared, the boat was captured by some pirates, and though the men just managed to save their lives, it was not till much later that the letters were recovered.[1] But it was then too late and the opportunity had passed away. If Blot had not committed the mistake and if de la Haye had received the letters in time, the whole course of events might have been different.

### 7. *Arrival of the Squadron in Ceylonese Waters*

On the 20th March (1672) the squadron anchored in the Bay of Batticaloa.[2] De la Haye sent some of the ships' boats to the coast to procure water and food provisions. A few shots were fired from a small fort which the Dutch had newly built there, and soon after two Dutchmen were sent out in a small boat to warn the French not to enter further into the Bay. As we have noticed already, two places had appeared to Caron to be most suitable for the establishment of the French in Ceylon, Batticaloa and Trinkomali; and of these two he preferred the first. But it is rather strange that he gave up that idea without making any attempt at

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 326-27.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 328. The squadron met the Dutch fleet on the 20th Feb., not far from Cape Comorin and it is rather strange that it took a month to reach Batticaloa.

Batticaloa. The squadron set sail again on the 21st and anchored in the Bay of Trinkomali. Abbé Carré does not mention Batticaloa at all, and Martin also is silent on the cause of the abandonment of the Batticaloa project. Probably Caron, who wanted to avoid all opposition and conflict, was led to abandon the project by the existence of a Dutch fort there, whereas Trinkomali was still unoccupied.

# CHAPTER V

## The Ceylon Enterprise

1. The arrival of the squadron at Trinkomali. 2. Construction of fortifications. 3. Treaty with the king of Kandy. 4. Lack of provisions. 5. Despatch of three ships to the Coromandel Coast and seizure of two of them by the Dutch. 6. Hostile actions of the Dutch. 7. Decision to leave the Bay of Trinkomali. 8. Arrangements regarding the garrison left behind. 9. Departure of the French fleet. 10. Fate of the garrison left behind. 11. Retrospect.

### *1. The Arrival of the Squadron at Trinkomali*

When the French squadron reached the Bay of Trinkomali, de la Haye, as was usual with him, went first, with a few armed boats, to reconnoitre the whole Bay and the little islets in it. There was a small Dutch fort of little importance,[1] and the French could hope to enter and occupy the Bay without encountering any opposition at all. After the reconnaissance de la Haye signalled to the rest of his squadron to enter and anchor in the Bay. At the news of the arrival of the French squadron a number of Ceylonese came on board the flagship and introduced themselves as having been sent by the king of Kandy to greet the French commander on his behalf. They were very well received and lavishly entertained, and at the time of their departure de la Haye gave them a letter for their king. But their somewhat strange behaviour led them to be suspected as Dutch spies, and they were detained on board the ship for a few days, after which they were released as nothing could be found against them.[2]

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 328.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 329.

The Bay of Trinkomali was a happy choice of the French. It enjoyed a central position with respect to the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, Bengal, Achin, China, Japan, the Red Sea ports, Persia and other commercial centres in the East. It lay right across the trade routes between the East and the West, and held out great commercial prospects. It had a magnificent natural harbour which could accommodate any number of ships,[1] and protect them from storms and bad weather. It was moreover very convenient for the repairing of ships, having all around vast forests of wood of the type suitable for shipbuilding. Besides these natural and commercial advantages, there were political advantages as well, as the local ruler professed to be a friend of the French and sought their alliance. The king of Ceylon had once invited the Dutch into the island to get rid of Portuguese control, but he soon realised the bitter truth that it was not a liberation but a mere change from one master to another. He was now eager to bring in the French in order to drive out the Dutch. The way had long been prepared by Caron's diplomacy, and when the squadron arrived at Trinkomali the French were assured of the whole-hearted support of the king.

## 2. *Construction of Fortifications*

De la Haye and Caron, having well considered the natural advantages of the place and the attractive terms of alliance proposed by the king of Kandy through the French Capuchin missionaries, decided to make use

[1] Abbé Carré states that the port could accommodate one thousand ships. That is unbelievable and evidently the figure is an error of writing. See *Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 276.

of such an opportunity and not to reject the offers as they had done to those of the king of Calicut. They therefore explored the whole Bay and the little islets in it, and drew up plans of fortifications. Three places were chosen for erecting fortifications, a large island named the Sun Island, a small one of the same name, and a long and narrow strip of land known as the Breton Point.[1] Of these three, strategically the most important was the smaller island, which commanded the entrance to the port and, if sufficiently fortified, could resist the strongest naval forces in the East. The island was very small, less than a mile and a half in circumference. Its eastern coast was so steep that there was no need of fortifications on that side. The southern coast which was strategically the most important was quickly put in a state of defence by the untiring energy of de la Haye. Three batteries of thirty pieces of artillery were raised commanding the entrance to the port and capable of defending it against all attacks. The western coast, which could be approached only by small boats, was protected by a pallisade to shelter the musketry. The distance between the island and the Breton Point was very small, less than eighty feet. Consequently, enemy ships, which could enter only one by one, would be completely exposed to the fire from the French batteries on both sides, as a strong guard-post had been established on the Breton Point as well. The only difficulty in this little island was lack of fresh water which had to be carried from a well on the Breton Point and also from the larger island where there was an abundant supply of fresh water. This latter island was fortified by

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 277.

Caron, and the French flag was hoisted there as a symbol of French sovereignty over the whole Bay.[1]

### 3. *Treaty with the King of Kandy*

The places had been chosen and fortifications begun before coming into direct contact with the king of Kandy. But it was necessary to negotiate with him and to procure from him a written grant of the Bay and its hinterland. It was also necessary to get from the king provisions for the squadron, and workmen and materials for the construction of fortifications. An embassy was therefore sent in April headed by an important officer (*Brigadier des gardes*), named Boisfontaine.[2] Early in May d'Orgeret, one of the members of the French embassy, returned. He reported to de la Haye about the good reception the king had given to the ambassadors, and showed him the valuable presents he had received of gold chain and other things. He also informed de la Haye that there were three envoys from the king waiting on land to be invited on board his ship. The Ceylonese envoys were magnificently received with gun salutes and other ceremonies of honour customary on such occasions.[3] They assured de la Haye that they would write to their king immediately about what they had seen and about the requirements of the French.

After this first embassy from the king of Kandy de la Haye received several other embassies on different occasions, but each time the conversation was of a most general nature, not leading to any important

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 278.
[2] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 329.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 339-40.

results. The main reason was that there was no real union of interests between the two parties, and therefore no definite and close understanding could be formed. They were drawn together for the moment in a loose alliance, as each one thought of being able to make use of the other for its own interests. The real object of the king of Kandy was to drive out the Dutch, and for this purpose he was eager to enlist the armed support of the French. The granting of territorial rights or commercial privileges was only an incidental result of the general policy, more of a forced necessity. Whereas the French cared only for this incidental result, mastery over the Bay and the coast of Trinkomali, without wanting in any way to come to an armed conflict with the Dutch. Their strange lack of foresight led them to believe that they could achieve their object in Ceylon and yet avoid a clash with the Dutch. The attitude of the French could hardly inspire any confidence or feeling of co-operation among the Ceylonese, who gradually discovered that far from achieving their object they were only allowing themselves to be exploited by two nations instead of one as before. That is the reason why the two parties could never come closer, but only wasted time in vague assurances and general promises of help and co-operation.

Let us now see the results of the successive embassies from the Court of Kandy. The second embassy visited de la Haye on board his ship on the 6th May, with the same result as the first.[1] On the 14th de la Haye made a ceremonial landing and visited the ambassadors of the king of Kandy. He requested

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. p. 340

them for provisions for the squadron, and they promised. But there was the end of it, and no supply came.[1] On the 17th the ambassadors sent sixty soldiers under three captains to help the French; and the Captain of the Guards of de la Haye, who visited them on the previous day, brought back with him a formal grant of the Bay of Trinkomali, Cotiary, and its dependencies.[2] The French were already in occupation of the places, but this formal grant was very useful to them, since they could now produce their legal title as against the Dutch who claimed these territories for themselves. But they failed to realise that the Dutch could not be deceived by a legal fiction of this nature and would resist to the utmost of their strength any attempt by another European nation to occupy a part of the island over which they exercised a sort of vague sovereignty. As we can see clearly now, the issue could be decided not by any grant from the powerless king of Kandy but by the strength of the grantee.

On the 18th de la Haye visited the Ceylonese envoys again, who informed him about the arrival of a General with 3,000 men at Batticaloa for the help of the French. They also promised to find provisions for the squadron, and men and materials for the construction of fortifications. But, as before, the promise was not meant to be kept, and the French received but little help. On their side the envoys asked for fifty Frenchmen to lay an ambush for a party of Dutch soldiers and Ceylonese in Dutch service who were going to their fort. De la Haye excused himself on the ground that the French were not yet at war with

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, p. 341.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 342.

the Dutch.[1] This answer was hardly expected to inspire any feeling of friendship and co-operation among the Ceylonese. They naturally thought that while they were expected to help the French, they got nothing in return. Moreover, the attitude of the French was interpreted as abject cowardice, and the Ceylonese became less eager to take up the side of a weak and impotent protector.

On the 28th two of the envoys of the king of Kandy came to see de la Haye again. They made their usual promises with the usual result. It is true that the French received some supplies but they were hardly sufficient for their needs. The ambassadors had now a better excuse for their failure to supply provisions, because the arrival of the Dutch fleet in the Bay had forced the inhabitants on the coast to retire far inland. On the 31st three new ambassadors came from the Court of Kandy with a letter from Boisfontaine, in which the latter assured de la Haye that the king was sending orders to his officers to furnish everything that the French needed—workers, materials and provisions. The ambassadors made lavish promises as usual, with the same result as before.[2] Two new envoys from the king of Kandy came to visit de la Haye on the 14th June with presents of fruits from the king's own garden, and with assurances that he was shortly going to join the French with a powerful army. On the 15th de la Haye landed on the coast upon an information that there had arrived twelve to fifteen thousand men, which in actual fact turned out to be one-tenth of the number; and even then the men were very badly armed and with

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. p. 342
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 346.

little experience of warfare. Still it was necessary to take it with a good grace and to be content with the assurance that the great help promised was near. Again the Ceylonese envoys informed de la Haye about the arrival of huge quantities of rice, which in fact turned out to be quite insignificant.[1] The French naturally thought that not much reliance could be put upon the assurances of the Ceylonese. On the 19th a formal ceremony was performed about the cession by the king of Kandy and the taking into possession by the French of the Bay of Trinkomali, Cotiary and its dependencies. A legal deed was drawn up in Latin and engraved on a brass plate which was fixed at the foot of the French flag planted on the larger island.[2] By this time, however, de la Haye and Caron had already decided to leave the Bay.

The account given above about the relations between the French and the king of Kandy is based mainly on Martin's "*Mémoires.*" Martin seems to be very bitter against the Ceylonese, and accuses them in a veiled manner of duplicity and even treachery. According to him the decision of de la Haye and Caron to leave the Bay of Trinkomali and to go elsewhere was quite justified, as the king of Kandy had failed to keep his word and to give sufficient help to the French. But the testimony of Abbé Carré, another equally reliable contemporary authority, does not support Martin. Abbé Carré does not find fault with the Ceylonese; on the other hand he gratefully acknowledges the help rendered by them. We do not know who is right, but Martin certainly gives an entirely

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 348-49.

[2] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 288; see also *Martin's Mémoires*, I, p. 349.

one-sided picture, without taking into account the view-point of the Ceylonese. It is true that the ambassadors of the king of Kandy promised much but failed to honour their promises to the full. But still the help they rendered was not inconsiderable. Moreover, we have already seen the true reason which prevented any closer understanding between the French and the king of Kandy. Their interests were not the same and their view-points were entirely different. The French wanted to establish themselves in the island of Ceylon with the help of the king of Kandy without coming into conflict with the Dutch, whereas the king of Kandy welcomed the French only in so far as their help was required to drive out the Dutch.

### *4. Lack of Provisions*

The greatest difficulty of the French at Trinkomali was lack of provisions. The fleet had started from Surat with very limited stocks of food, and by the time it reached Ceylon the food problem became quite acute. There was no possibility of getting any considerable supplies from the island. Although Ceylon was very rich in spices and similar other things, she produced but little food. When the island was under the domination of the Portuguese, or later when it passed under the control of the Dutch, large quantities of food supplies had to be imported from the neighbouring coasts of Malabar, Coromandel and Bengal.

The lack of provisions was one of the principal factors which led to a widespread outbreak of disease among the French. A large number of them fell ill and the squadron lost several of its principal

officers.[1] The mortality among the ordinary soldiers and sailors was even greater, and on an average five or six persons were buried everyday. In many of these cases it was really death from simple starvation or undernourishment, and being pressed by hunger a large number of men left the squadron and deserted over to the side of the Dutch.[2]

One cannot help being surprised that the squadron was reduced to such extremities that people died of hunger within three months of its departure from Surat where any quantity of food-stuffs could have been procured. Martin tells us that in a private talk with de la Haye much later when he took the liberty of discussing the subject frankly with him, the latter said that he had been deceived by the reports of some people who told him that he could have everything he needed in Ceylon, which made him decide not to stock large quantities of provisions at Surat.[3] But why should de la Haye have relied upon the reports of these people as against the advice of Caron, than whom nobody knew Ceylon better, to keep in store provisions for one year?[4] Had he followed Caron's advice, the squadron would never have been reduced to such dire needs at Trinkomâli, and the whole course of future events might have been different. But it would be rather unjust to put the whole blame on de la Haye. Just a half excuse for his conduct may be found in the internal quarrels at Surat, and the difficulty he had to meet with in procuring provisions for the squadron there.

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 329-30.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 338.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 331.
[4] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 283.

### 5. *Despatch of Three Ships to the Coromandel Coast and Seizure of Two of them by the Dutch*

Being in great need of provisions for the squadron and not seeing any hope of getting them from the island itself, de la Haye and Caron decided to send three ships to the neighbouring Coromandel coast to procure the necessary supplies there. The three ships selected for this purpose were *Le Phénix*, *L'Europe* and a hooker (a type of Dutch ship used in the seventeenth century), *Le St. Louis*. *Le Phénix*, commanded by de la Mélinière, was sent to Porto Novo, within the dominions of the king of Bijapur. *L'Europe*, commanded by Dupré, was sent to the Danish settlement at Tranquebar; and the hooker, commanded by Chanlatte, was sent to the English settlement at Madras.[1] This last boat also carried one of the Capuchin Fathers, who had come to Ceylon to start secret negotiations with the king of Kandy, and who was now charged with carrying some letters to Surat for the Directors there and for the Court and the *Chambre Générale* in Paris. Precautions were taken against any possible enemy action by putting on board *Le Phénix* a company of infantry under Darmes and also by arming the second ship, *L'Europe*.[2]

There was nothing wrong in sending the three ships to the Coromandel coast, and it was a wise move to arm them against any possible enemy action. But what was surprising is that de la Haye had not given any express orders to the captains of these ships as to what they had to do in case of an actual attack by the Dutch. He must have realised that the Dutch

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 224.
[2] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 330.

were in an aggressive mood and would not allow the French to establish themselves at Trinkomali without a trial of strength. Their fleet under Rijcklof van Goens was lying off the Bay of Trinkomali and they had already, by several incidents, made known their hostile intentions. De la Haye should have foreseen that the Dutch would make an attempt to seize the three ships sent to the Coromandel coast, which would weaken the French squadron not merely in numerical strength but also by the stoppage of food supplies. It was therefore necessary to make provision for this possibility by giving express orders to the captains to offer resistance at least in self-defence, or to get away and take refuge in some friendly port on the Coromandel coast. A responsible captain would have refused to start on a voyage under similar circumstances without express orders and instructions about his duty. But de la Mélinière, the captain of *Le Phénix* who had been newly promoted by de la Haye to take command of a ship, had not the courage to ask for express orders for fear of incurring the displeasure of de la Haye and of being relegated to an inferior position. Nor were the captains of *L'Europe* and *Le St. Louis* more careful about their obvious duty and responsibility.[1] On the 8th April the three ships sailed out of the Bay of Trinkomali for the Coromandel coast which in good weather took only twenty-four hours to reach.

The sending of the three ships to the Coromandel coast served as a good advertisement to the Dutch about the acute shortage of provisions on the French squadron. The Dutch had been looking for an opportunity to strike a blow at the French fleet

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 330-31.

without coming into actual conflict, since it was as yet much stronger than theirs. They now decided that the best way to compel the French fleet to come out of the Bay of Trinkomali was to cut off its food supply. With that object in view the Dutch fleet advanced and anchored at the entrance to the Bay in order to stop there the three French ships on their return from the Coromandel coast.[1] This manœuvre of the Dutch fleet within full view of the French should have made them realise the hostile intentions of the Dutch and the necessity of taking all proper action for the safe return of their ships. But their strangely inactive and irresolute policy made them blind to the coming danger.

The story of the capture of two French ships by the Dutch is most astonishing and we do not know what to regard as the chief factor responsible for this loss, the irresolute policy of de la Haye and Caron, the foolishness and cowardice of the officers and men on board the ships, or their deliberate treachery. Of the three ships sent to the Coromandel coast, *Le Phénix* was the first to return. As she was approaching the Bay of Trinkomali the Dutch despatched four ships to intercept her. The French ship noticed the Dutch fleet from a distance, but had not the prudence to turn back her course and save herself on the high sea where the Dutch would not have followed her, their plan being only to cut off the supply of provisions to the French squadron. *Le Phénix* was stopped by the Dutch ships and ordered to follow them. She was then taken to a small Bay near Trinkomali, where all the munitions of war on board, of which the Dutch

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 224 and also p. 279.

were in need, were removed (30th May). As the Dutch had not yet any news of the war which had already broken out in Europe between them and the French, they treated all the men on board the captured ship in a very kind manner.[1] The officers and men were quite content and made no attempt to go back to their squadron, nor did de la Haye make any attempt to save the ship, except only by writing a letter of protest to the Dutch General which met with a contemptuous reply.[2]

The second French ship, *L'Europe*, which had gone to Tranquebar, got the news of the capture of *Le Phénix* and had warnings from several quarters to take good care not to fall into the hands of the Dutch on the return voyage to Trinkomali. But the captain and officers of the ship did not trouble themselves in the least about these warnings and spent their time in merrymaking and voluptuous pleasures. When the Danish settlement failed to offer them sufficient diversion, they went to the Dutch settlement at Negapatam. The Dutch were delighted to entertain the French, but they secretly sent news to their fleet, lying at the entrance to the Bay of Trinkomali, about the time that *L'Europe* would start on her return voyage. It is not unlikely that the French knew about the conspiracy of the Dutch and were really in league with them. That is confirmed by the fact that when the returning French ship was met by a few Dutch ships, she followed them quietly and unhesitatingly to the neighbouring Bay where the first ship had been taken (5th June, 1672).[3] Thus the second ship also was captured

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 280-81 and also p. 224.

[2] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 347.

[3] Abbé Carré (pp. 225 and 281) gives the date of the capture as 13th June, whereas Martin (see above) gives it as 5th June.

by the Dutch within full view of the French without the latter making any attempt to save her.

A few days later the hooker, *Le St. Louis*, left Madras and proceeded towards Trinkomali. She noticed from a distance a fleet lying at the entrance to the Bay and took it to be French. But as she came nearer, she discovered the fleet to be Dutch, barring the entrance to the Bay. The captain of the French ship, Chanlatte, had probably some previous warning about the capture of the two other ships and had therefore some misgivings. No sooner had he recognised the Dutch fleet than he turned back the ship's course and returned at full speed to Madras, where he decided to remain till he received any definite news from Trinkomali. The ship actually stayed there till the arrival of the French squadron at St. Thomé when she rejoined the fleet.

The Dutch, as soon as they noticed the third French ship approaching, sent out one of their ships to intercept and seize her. But the French, who had remained passive spectators of the capture of the first two ships, at last woke up to the danger of the situation and immediately despatched three ships, *Le Triomphe*, *Le Breton* and *Le Julles*, to stop the Dutch ships. There was a short but sharp naval action between *Le Triomphe* and the Dutch ship, in which the latter was so severely damaged that she saved herself by flight, *Le Triomphe* being prevented from pursuing her by some damage to her top-sail by a Dutch shot.[1]

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 282. See also the story narrated to Abbé Carré by a Frenchman who was on board the French hooker and who later deserted and went to Golconda, pp. 224-25.

The Dutch, who took no account of their seizure of the two French ships, regarded the action of *Le Triomphe* as a flagrant and unwarranted violation of the peace, and accused the French of having committed the first act of hostility. This gave them a good excuse to arrest all the Frenchmen on board the two captured vessels and to treat them as prisoners of war. They were all sent crowded together in a small boat to Negapatam, where the ordinary soldiers and sailors were imprisoned in an old and dilapidated Portuguese Church. Only the officers were treated more kindly, and that was because they were disloyal to their own nation and preferred to live with the Dutch. Having distributed the money and goods of their ships among themselves these officers had no desire to return to their squadron. If they had liked, they might have made an attempt to save themselves during the crossing from Ceylon to Negapatam. On board the boat carrying them the French had, besides the large number of ordinary sailors, about fifty officers and soldiers with perfect freedom, while on the other side there were only twenty Dutchmen and an equal number of Ceylonese. Some of the more honest spirits among the French did, as a matter of fact, hatch a plot to overpower the Dutch, but they were stopped by the officers who were moved by their personal interests.[1]

### 6. *Hostile Actions of the Dutch*

It was only to be expected that although the Dutch were not in actual possession of the Bay of Trinkomali they could not look on as mere passive spectators while the French established themselves in

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 282-83.

the Bay with the help of the king of Kandy. The French remained for long under the delusion that an open conflict with the Dutch might be avoided, but the latter had no such delusion and were determined to go to any length to drive out the intruders from the Bay. At first their activities were confined to mere reconnaissance work, to know the position and plans of the French. In the second stage, they put pressure upon the French by cutting off their food-supply both by land and sea, and by continuously harassing their guard-posts by surprise attacks. In the third stage, after the French squadron had left the Bay, the Dutch started open warfare against the garrison left behind and made themselves complete masters of the place.

As soon as the Dutch came to know about the arrival of the French squadron in the Bay of Trinkomali, they sent a fleet of fifteen ships, with twelve hundred European and a large number of Asiatic troops on board. The Dutch held themselves in a small Bay near Trinkomali where they had a fort, not daring to risk themselves in the Bay where the French squadron was, as they knew that their forces were not equal to those of the French.[1] From there, towards the end of March, they sent a small boat to the Bay of Trinkomali to reconnoitre the position and plans of the French. On the 2nd April another boat was sent with a letter to de la Haye from Rijcklof van Goens, the Dutch Governor of Ceylon and Commander of the fleet, in which he protested against the construction of a French fort at Trinkomali which he claimed as belonging to the Dutch Company. De la Haye

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 277.

replied that the place belonged to the king of Kandy, who had permitted him to build a fort there.[1]

After the departure of three French ships for the Coromandel coast, the Dutch fleet came nearer and anchored at the entrance to the Bay of Trinkomali, and Dutch soldiers were posted on the roads from Kandy to cut off the supply of provisions for the French fleet. The Ceylonese vigorously repulsed the Dutch and by means of skilful ambushes killed a large number of them. There were open fights also at Tambelegam and Cotiary in which the Dutch were thoroughly worsted. The Ceylonese sought armed help from the French, and if the latter had now joined them, it might have been possible for them to deal an effective blow upon the Dutch.[2] But de la Haye and Caron would not listen to any proposal for an armed attack, and were determined to wait for the Dutch to begin hostilities first. The pity was that even after the Dutch had taken the offensive, the French could not be moved to any determined action.

The Dutch realised the situation much better than the French. On the loss or recapture of Trinkomali depended their future position in Ceylon, and they were therefore determined to regain the place by any means whatsoever. Besides using force, they also took resort to propaganda to cause desertions among the French, in which they were helped considerably by the acute food-shortage on the French squadron. From these deserters the Dutch came to know all about the positions, strength and plans of the French, which enabled them to make surprise raids on the French guard-post on the Breton Point. Throughout the

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 330.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 279.

month of May and the first half of June they made repeated attacks, and although every time they had to withdraw in the end, they succeeded in carrying off a large number of Frenchmen as prisoners.[1] De la Haye wrote to Rijcklof van Goens on the 1st June protesting against the hostile actions of the Dutch and threatening him with reprisals. The reply came on the 4th, that the actions of the Dutch were only in retaliation against the illegal establishment of the French in the Bay of Trinkomali which belonged to them. The climax of Dutch aggression was reached on the night of the 9th June. Having got full information from some of the deserters about the state of French defences on the Breton Point the Dutch made a surprise attack in strength, captured the guard-post and took all the Frenchmen there prisoners. Next morning, however, the French landed a strong force on the Breton Point, and after a brief encounter drove away the Dutch.[2] But strangely enough, the aggressive policy of the Dutch, which should have made the French more determined to fight it out, had just the reverse effect, and the French decided not to leave any more garrison on the Breton Point.

It is difficult to explain the conduct of the French or to find out the motives which guided their policy. If they had thought that they could establish themselves in the Bay of Trinkomali without any breach with the Dutch, the course of events should have opened their eyes and made them realise their mistake. If on the other hand, they had waited only for the Dutch to take the offensive first, even the starting of definite

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 341-44.

[2] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 286. Martin does not mention any open fight at all; see "*Mémoires*," I, p. 348.

hostilities by the Dutch did not move them to any determined action. The appearance of the Dutch fleet at the entrance to the Bay was intended as a threat to the French. The Dutch landed troops on the coast to cut off supplies for the French squadron. They seized two of the French ships sent to the Coromandel coast, and the third one could just barely escape. There were constant skirmishes on land in which the Dutch always took the offensive and captured quite a number of French soldiers. After all these, could it still be argued that the Dutch had not started hostilities and could be persuaded to live at peace with the French? If the French were convinced that they were weaker than the Dutch, they should have done better to quit the Bay at the earliest possible moment, and not to have exposed themselves to further losses. The whole conduct shows absolute indecision and lack of judgment on the part of the men to whose care the squadron had been entrusted.

### *7. Decision to Leave the Bay of Trinkomali*

The climax of the blunderous policy of the French was reached towards the end of June, when de la Haye and Caron suddenly decided to quit the Bay, leaving behind only a small garrison to carry on with the construction of fortifications and to defend the place against the attacks of the Dutch. There could have been no more unwise decision than this, just at the moment when the Dutch were pressing the French hard both by land and sea and were gradually getting more and more aggressive. The decision to leave the Bay at this moment was naturally regarded by the Dutch as a cowardly surrender. But what was a greater folly was the decision to leave a small garrison behind. The

fortifications were not yet complete, and the garrison left behind was exposed to the attacks of the enemy. Moreover, the garrison was too small in number to be able to resist the numerically superior forces of the Dutch. It seems clear that the French did not know their own minds and did not care to examine the situation critically. They should have considered three things carefully. First, was the Ceylon expedition profitable for them and were they able to hold their position against the attacks of the Dutch? Second, was it better to give up the Ceylon expedition and to go somewhere else where they would have greater chances of success? Third, should they quit Ceylon permanently or leave suitable forces there to defend their position against the Dutch? Regarding the first point, it is beyond doubt that the Ceylon expedition, if successful, would have been profitable to the French, and if they liked, they were quite able to defend themselves against the attacks of the Dutch. But they were lacking in confidence and resolution, and unless they adopted a more determined and firm policy towards the Dutch it was better for them to leave the Bay and not to expose themselves to further losses. Regarding the second point, Caron thought that the possession of the island of Banka offered better prospects of success and greater profits to the French. He had already made a treaty with the king of Bantam and had given his word to go there with a strong fleet. But what difference was there between Banka and Ceylon? If the French could not defend themselves in the island of Ceylon, what chances had they of defending themselves in the island of Banka? Regarding the third point, probably the French themselves did not know their own minds, whether to leave the island permanently or to come back

at some future date. It seems that Caron definitely intended to lead the squadron to Banka, and that the voyage to the Coromandel coast was made only to procure provisions.[1] The capture of St. Thomé was not in his mind at all. Now, if the squadron was to go to Banka, it meant the virtual abandonment of the Ceylon project, as two projects could not be undertaken and completed at the same time. It is probable therefore that Caron, either frightened by the vehement opposition of the Dutch or for some other reason, definitely wanted to abandon the Ceylon project and to concentrate wholly on the island of Banka. But having once undertaken the Ceylon project and having established themselves in the Bay of Trinkomali, the French should have courageously completed this work before undertaking another enterprise. Abandonment of the project at this stage would mean not merely so much useless loss of men, money and materials, but also a cowardly letting down of the king of Kandy. It would moreover increase the arrogance of the Dutch who would take it as a defeat for the French and a victory for themselves. On the other hand, the leaving of a small garrison at Trinkomali and the sending of another ambassador to reside at the Court of the king of Kandy would indicate that the French did not intend to give up the Ceylon project entirely. That was also a grave blunder. It would have been a lesser evil to leave the island completely than to keep a small garrison there, which was sure to fall into the hands of the Dutch.

Before his departure de la Haye wrote to the king of Kandy that he was being compelled to leave the Bay with his squadron because of the negligence of the

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 289.

Ceylonese to furnish the necessary supplies.[1] In spite of Martin's testimony to the same effect,[2] this sort of accusation was a gross calumny on a faithful ally. The Ceylonese were certainly doing their best to bring food supplies and other provisions to the French squadron, but were being constantly hampered by the Dutch, against whom the French could not be persuaded to move at all. Even when two of their ships bringing provisions from the Coromandel coast were seized by the Dutch, the French looked idly on without making any attempt to save them. If the squadron was lacking in food supplies, the French were to thank themselves and not the Ceylonese.

### 8. *Arrangements Regarding the Garrison Left Behind*

De la Haye made elaborate arrangements regarding the garrison, munitions and food provisions to be left behind at Trinkomali. De Lesboris, captain of a company of infantry, was appointed Governor of the fort with a wide jurisdiction, extending over the whole Bay of Trinkomali, Cotiary and its dependencies. Father Maurice, who was more of a soldier than a priest, was left as the *Intendant* (Controller) of the fortifications. Cloche, an old clerk of the Company, was appointed Commissar and Treasurer-General and Commander of the ship *Le St. Jean de Baptiste* which was left behind. The garrison consisted of twenty men belonging to the ship *Le St. Jean de Baptiste*, two companies of soldiers under Dufresne and de Lesboris numbering only ninety, thirty Asiatic Christians, and three companies of Ceylonese troops

1 Abbé Carré— *Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 290.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 351.

numbering about two hundred.[1] But many of the French soldiers were ill and could not be depended upon for active service. The garrison, which was hardly sufficient even in peace-time to carry on with the plans of fortifications, was wholly inadequate for defending the half-constructed fort and the exposed position of the French against the determined attacks of the Dutch.

The suddenness and haste with which it was decided to leave the Bay led to the loss of the ship *L'Indienne*, which was being repaired and refitted at the time. As the work had not yet been completed, the ship was abandoned, her sailors being distributed among the remaining ships of the squadron. It was also decided to leave the Company's ship *Le St. Jean de Baptiste* at Trinkomali to serve as a store-house, since the fortifications on the smaller Sun Island were not yet complete. But it was a mistake on the part of de la Haye to leave such a good and well-armed ship to serve as a store-house. *Le Triomphe* or *Le Julles* which had become much weaker for active service might have served the purpose quite as well, and that would have spared the better-built and better-armed ship for more important work.[2] The arrangements regarding provisions and munitions were quite satisfactory, as sufficient quantities were left in stock to last up to October, when the Dutch ships would be compelled to withdraw because of the furious winds and storms which usually blew at that time of the year on the eastern coast, where there was no other safe shelter except in the Bay of Trinkomali.[3] The only two disadvantages

[1] Abbé Carré— *Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 290.
[2] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 350.
[3] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 289.

for the French were, first, that the fortifications were not yet complete, and second, that the garrison was not sufficiently strong to defend the place against the Dutch, who were sure to make an attempt to seize the place before it was properly fortified and before the bad weather set in compelling them to withdraw.

Before his departure de la Haye sent de la Nérolle as ambassador to the king of Kandy, with a letter informing him about the reason which compelled the squadron to leave the Bay of Trinkomali for the time being, and unjustly laying the blame at the door of the Ceylonese for having failed to supply the required provisions. De la Haye wrote to him that the squadron was going to the Coromandel coast only to procure provisions, and that he would return to Trinkomali within three months. Possibly that was really in his mind, but circumstances prevented him, as will be seen later. The most surprising thing is that de la Haye did not even care to wait for the reply of the king. If he had only waited for a short while, he would have found that the latter had sent considerable number of troops, food supplies, workmen and materials for the help of the French. But he could now think of nothing else but to leave the Bay at the earliest possible moment. Abbé Carré rightly commented on the conduct of the French, "O, nation! the most inconstant in the world." [1]

## 9. *Departure of the French Fleet*

Thus at the moment when it was required most to put the finishing touch to such a very profitable enterprise, the squadron sailed out of the Bay of

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 201.

Trinkomali. It now consisted of eight ships only, *Le Navarre*, *Le Breton*, *Le Flamand*, *Le Julles*, *Le Triomphe*, *La Diligente*, *La Sultanne* and *La Barbet*. It had been considerably weakened by the loss of six ships since reaching Indian waters, *Le St. Jean de Bayonne* which had been left to be dismantled at Surat, the three ships which had been sent to the Coromandel coast, of which two had been captured by the Dutch and the third had taken refuge at Madras, *L'Indienne*, which was beached at Trinkomali and *Le St. Jean de Baptiste*, which was left there to serve as a warehouse for the provisions of the garrison. The squadron was moreover weakened by the loss of half its crew-personnel and finances.

On the 9th July, 1672, the fleet sailed out of the Bay ranging the coast at the closest possible distance, and passed within half a cannon range to the leeward of the Dutch fleet, which was lying near their fort. The French apprehended an attack by the Dutch and kept themselves ready for defence. But nothing happened and the French fleet sailed out to the open sea without any opposition, the Dutch fleet remaining quietly where it was.[1]

### *10. Fate of the Garrison Left Behind*

On the 10th July, the day after the French squadron had left the Bay, there arrived to the French at Trinkomali a small ship, loaded with food-stuffs sent by the Ceylonese nobles by order of the king of Kandy. The nobles sent information that they were in the village of Tambelegam near the coast, and having waited there for a long time for some French representa-

[1] Abbé Carré— *Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 292.

tives they went to some neighbouring places to procure more provisions and munitions. But it was too late and these provisions and munitions never reached the French. The Dutch had waited only for the departure of the French squadron to enter the Bay, and they did not lose any time now. Being warned by their spies that the king of Kandy was making large-scale preparations to help the French, that the fortifications on the smaller island were still very incomplete, that the garrison left to defend the place was quite small in number, and that all the provisions and munitions of the French were stored in a ship with only a few men to defend, the Dutch decided to strike at once, without giving the French and the Ceylonese any more time to prepare resistance. When the French learnt that the Ceylonese nobles had returned to the village of Tambelegam, they prepared to send some representatives there, but the Dutch were already on the move, and the French were fully occupied with the more urgent and important work of defending their position.

On the 12th July the Dutch fleet, consisting of twelve ships, entered the Bay and anchored off Cotiary. The next few days were spent by the Dutch in exploring the Bay and finding out the weak spots in the French defences. On the 16th they landed a small party on the Breton Point and hoisted their flag there. On the same day they disembarked nearly a thousand to twelve hundred men on the larger Sun Island (also known as Caron Island), which was very close to the smaller island on which stood the French fort. The next few days were spent in small skirmishes during which the Dutch landed four pieces of artillery which were levelled against the ship *Le St. Jean de Baptiste* and the smaller island. It is rather strange that while

the Dutch were busy setting up their artillery, the French did not stir themselves very much to hamper them, which they could easily have done with their artillery on their ship and on the smaller island. This would naturally give rise to a suspicion that they had no serious intention of defending the place and had no desire to irritate the Dutch, so as to be able to get better terms of capitulation.[1] It is even confirmed by the fact that they made no attempt to guard the narrow strait leading to the port, through which only small boats could pass and which could have been blocked by them from their position on the smaller Sun Island.

On the 18th July the Dutch decided to seize the ship *Le St. Jean de Baptiste*. They sent some well-armed boats at night, which passed through the narrow strait without any hindrance and came near the French ship. The latter was captured without any bloodshed on either side, although the French fired a few shots. The poor defence put up by the French may be explained by the fact that they had only twelve men on board and were therefore hopelessly outnumbered by their enemies. But considering the conduct of the Frenchmen on board the two ships previously captured by the Dutch, it is quite probable that the men on board the ship *Le St. Jean de Baptiste* did not really care to defend themselves. That explains why they were so well received by the Dutch Admiral, Rijcklof van Goens, who assured them of mild and gentle treatment and declared that what he was doing was only under compulsion to retake a place which the French had unjustly usurped from the Dutch.[2]

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 294.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 295. Martin on the other hand states that the French prisoners were very badly treated and put in chains; see "*Mémoires*," I, p. 367.

When the French on the smaller island saw the capture of their ship they gave up the struggle as lost. The Commander of the garrison, de Lesboris, called a council of all the officers, who decided to open negotiations with the Dutch at once. Père Maurice was sent to the Dutch camp to draw up the articles of capitulation.

That was the end of the Ceylon enterprise of the French. A few months later, in October, 1672, when some of the Dutch ships carrying the French prisoners to Batavia stopped at Masulipatam, Francois Martin saw de Lesboris and was told by him that the main reason for the French capitulation at Trinkomali was the absolute lack of water on the smaller island. Fresh water had to be carried from the neighbouring larger island, the Dutch occupation of which compelled the French to surrender. De Lesboris also gave out a curious story that de la Haye had originally suggested that Caron should remain with the garrison. That was rather strange, for if Caron was to be left behind, it certainly could not have been the intention of the French to lead the squadron to Baňka, one of the principal reasons, as we have noticed already, for which they decided to leave the Bay of Trinkomali. The whole thing becomes more mysterious. However, Caron wanted at least four hundred men, and as it would have considerably weakened the squadron, de Lesboris was left behind with a much smaller number.[1] The story might have been invented only to emphasise the point that the responsibility for the French capitulation at Trinkomali lay entirely with de la Haye, who had left a hopelessly small number of men to defend the place.

The terms of capitulation proposed by the French and the replies of the Dutch are given in Martin's

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. pp. 371-72.

*Mémoires*. Most of the French demands were not granted, and it was on the replies of the Dutch that the final treaty was based. The preamble to the treaty was very significant. It stated definitely that the Bay of Trinkomali and the islands in it belonged to the Dutch and had been unjustly usurped from them by the French.[1] Thus the French were compelled to admit that they had no legal right over the Bay of Trinkomali. Among the important Articles, numbers three and nine stated that all the French prisoners were to be taken first to Batavia. From there they would be sent to Holland, where it would lie at the discretion of the Dutch Government (*nos souverains*) to send them elsewhere or not. Article six stated that an inventory would be made of all the arms and munitions belonging to the French, at which the latter were allowed to send two representatives (*commissaires*). Article seven stated that no insult would be done to the French while they came out of their fort; and Article ten stated that the French officers and men would be treated, following their respective ranks, in the same manner as Dutch officers and men were treated.[2] It will be seen later how these terms were violated by the Dutch and how the French prisoners were cruelly mal-treated at Batavia. Probably, the most important was Article eleven. The French proposed that the Ceylonese soldiers and workers who had helped them should be allowed to go where they liked, but the Dutch carried their point that the Ceylonese should be left entirely at their discretion. It was a most base desertion of some three hundred subjects of a faithful ally, the king of Kandy. The French had received all possible help from

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 370.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 368-69.

them; and as a reward abandoned them to the furious anger and revenge of their most cruel enemy, who hanged some of them and put others in chains and treated as slaves.[1] No words could be strong enough to condemn the conduct of the French. It is true that they were powerless to secure better terms for these poor Ceylonese, but they certainly could have insisted on this point more vehemently than they seemed to have done.

After the French surrender the Dutch continued the work of fortifications, left unfinished by the French, on the same lines as before. They did not think that merely the capture of Trinkomali would lead to a war with the French, neither side having as yet any news of what was happening in Europe. Keeping therefore only a small garrison at the place for the completion of the fortifications, they left the Bay with their fleet for the Coromandel coast, Bengal and other places to load merchandise for Batavia. The French officers and men were distributed among the Dutch ships and were sent to Negapatam. There they met the other Frenchmen who had been taken prisoners earlier, including those of the two captured ships.[2] From Negapatam some of the French prisoners were sent straight to Batavia, and some on board the ships which went *via* Masulipatam and Bengal. When the Dutch ships stopped at Masulipatam in October, 1672, de Lesboris requested Francois Martin to see him on board his ship, which the latter did with the permission of the Dutch authorities. It has already been mentioned what de Lesboris told Martin about the French surrender at Trinkomali.

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient* p. 370. Martin states that there were only eighty to a hundred Ceylonese; see "*Mémoires*", I, p. 370.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 895.

On board the Dutch ships lying in the roadstead of Masulipatam the French prisoners, who were left in perfect liberty, were more than twice the number of the Dutch, and if they had liked, they could have easily overpowered the handful of Dutchmen. It would have dealt a very severe blow to the Dutch, as apart from the loss of so many prisoners, they would have lost their richly laden vessels also. Martin himself suggested it to de Lesboris and some other French officers. But they were so much dissatisfied with the conduct of de la Haye that they would rather rot in the prisons at Batavia than go back and rejoin their Chief. They frankly admitted that it was quite easy to capture the ships, and that in just thirty hours they could bring them before St. Thomé where the French squadron lay at the time. But they preferred the satisfaction of their personal feelings to the glory and honour of their nation.[1] When we remember the similar conduct of the French officers of the two captured ships during their voyage from Trinkomali to Negapatam, we need not be at all surprised at the failure of the French naval expedition.

### *11. Retrospect*

Thus ended the Ceylon enterprise of the French. When their naval squadron first appeared in Indian waters, it was a formidable striking force and held out brilliant prospects of success. But as it left the Bay of Trinkomali, it had ceased to cause any alarm to the other European nations trading in the East. The French had lost six ships and nearly half their manpower and finances. But what were more important were first the considerable loss of credit with the

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 372-73.

Indian Powers who could now place but little reliance upon the French as allies, and second, the great deterioration in the morale of the French officers and men after the disastrous end of their first large-scale enterprise.

As we look back upon the course of events traced before, three factors stand out prominent as being mainly responsible for the failure of the enterprise; first, the lack of full co-operation between the French and the Ceylonese; second, the passive attitude of the French towards the Dutch; and third, their vacillating policy, as proved particularly by the hasty decision to leave the Bay of Trinkomali. Regarding the first factor, the French failed to realise that the only way of obtaining the fullest co-operation of the Ceylonese was by giving them something in return, by joining them actively against the Dutch usurpers of their country. The Ceylonese could have rendered invaluable help to the French but they had to be given the price for it, to which the French most unwisely did not agree on the placid plea that they were technically at peace with the Dutch. Had the French cared to win the fullest co-operation of the Ceylonese, the course of events at Trinkomali might have been different. Secondly, the French did not understand to the last that if they wanted to establish themselves at Trinkomali, a clash with the Dutch was inevitable. They deluded themselves with the hope that the Dutch would leave them at peace. They would not move against the Dutch even after receiving repeated affronts from them. The seizure of their ships before their very eyes and the capture of their guard-posts and men failed to have any effect upon them. They looked idly on as the Dutch offensive became more open and violent. Thirdly, the

French followed a most vacillating policy, and did not know their own minds. They did not consider carefully the utility of their Ceylon enterprise. They did not think what they could have done at Trinkomali with a little more determination and firmness on their part. They left the Bay of Trinkomali in the most hasty manner without definitely deciding what to do in future, whether to come back to Ceylon or to leave the island permanently. It seems that they left the Bay only to get out temporarily from a difficult situation which was their own creation.

A part of the responsibility for the conduct of the French may be fixed upon the accidental loss of some important letters from the Court (as mentioned already) which fell into the hands of the Malabar corsairs.[1] Had the letters reached de la Haye in time, he would have followed a different policy with the Dutch, and the whole course of events might have been different. But accidents play a great part in history, and who knows what shape the course of events might have taken but for this particular and little known accident?

1 See Chapter IV, pp. 112-13. For the failure of the Ceylon enterprise Kaeppelin is inclined to put the whole blame on Caron, whom he accuses directly of being in conspiracy with the Dutch. "Till the end of his stay in the East, Caron never ceased influencing the Viceroy just in the manner in which it was favourable to them (the Dutch)." According to Kaeppelin de la Haye would have attacked the Dutch but for the repeated advice of Caron. Even the blunder of leaving a small garrison at Trinkomali after the departure of the fleet was due to the advice of Caron. See Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, pp. 93-94. But whatever might have been the attitude of Caron, de la Haye certainly cannot be exonerated from all responsibility. It is true that he had definite instructions to follow Caron's advice in every matter, but when, as Kaeppelin states, he had reasons to suspect Caron of treachery, he could have, as the Commander of the Fleet, taken up a more determined attitude, without directly defying the authority of Caron. He could have taken measures against the Dutch at least in self-defence.

# CHAPTER VI

## THE CAPTURE OF ST. THOME

1. The fleet at Tranquebar. 2. At Porto Novo. 3. History of St. Thomé. 4. Origin of the French design upon St. Thomé. 5. Apparent cause of the French attack on St. Thomé. 6. Capture of St. Thomé. 7. Effects of the French capture of St. Thomé.

### *1. The Fleet at Tranquebar*

The French fleet, after sailing out of the Bay of Trinkomali on the 9th July, 1672, proceeded up the Coromandel coast and anchored before the Danish settlement at Tranquebar. The Danes were quite friendly, and when de la Haye sent an officer on land to visit the Governor and ask his permission to procure food-stuffs and other provisions for the squadron, he received a very cordial welcome. Not only that, the Danish Governor even made an attempt to pay a visit to de la Haye on board his ship, but his small boat was prevented from reaching the French squadron by high waves and contrary winds, and he was obliged to return. When de la Haye came to know about it he decided to land on the 13th, accompanied by Caron, some of the principal officers of the squadron and his personal guards. The Danish Governor came to meet him half-way in a small boat. They all landed together and went to the fort which fired all its guns in honour of the august guest. There was a splendid banquet, and the artillery fired as healths were drunk. In the evening de la Haye returned to his ship, accompanied

by the Danish Governor and several other important officers of the place. A supper was provided on board the Admiral ship which was celebrated with equal magnificence. The Danish party then returned, escorted by several officers of the French squadron as a mark of civility. De la Haye sent his secretary on the 15th to thank the Danish Governor for his courtesy and to present him with some curious arms. The latter returned the thanks and agreed to do everything that de la Haye wished of him. During the three or four days that the squadron remained in the roadstead of Tranquebar, the French purchased large quantities of food-stuffs and other necessary provisions through the cordial and friendly help of the Danes, and they even left money with some of the Danes to procure provisions till the return of the squadron.[1]

Castonnet des Fosses is evidently wrong in his statement that the Danish Governor, after a secret conference with Caron, refused any help to the French.[2] We do not know what authority he had for making such a statement. But it may be taken for certain that the French were allowed to procure large quantities of food-stuffs and other provisions during their stay at Tranquebar. The two most reliable contemporary authorities, Abbé Carré and Martin, confirm this and mention definitely about the very cordial and friendly attitude of the Danes. It is not known whether Caron had any secret conference with the Danish Governor or not, but it is very unlikely that he could have suggested the refusal of any help to the French. What-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. p. 352.

2 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 101. Kaeppelin also makes a similar statement;—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, pp. 95-96.

ever might have been his attitude towards the Dutch, there is certainly not sufficient evidence to accuse him of such mean and underhand tactics against the Company of which he was still a servant. As a matter of fact, he has been dubbed as a villain rather too much, and evidence has not always been thought necessary in condemning him.

## 2. *At Porto Novo*

The squadron set sail from Tranquebar on the 16th and anchored before Porto Novo on the 17th (July). It was within the dominions of the king of Bijapur, who had already given marks of friendship towards the French. The Muhammedan Governor of the place gave a warm welcome to the French and expressed a great zeal to be of some service to them. De la Haye landed incognito, and mixed up among his officers he reconnoitred the place himself. During the two days that the squadron remained at Porto Novo, the French were able to load large quantities of provisions. De la Haye received an embassy with rich presents from a local ruler on the Coromandel coast, "the King and Prince of all the lands from Negapatam to Porto Novo." [1] This ruler expressed great admiration for the French, and offered them two advantageous places in his dominions for the establishment of a settlement. De la Haye returned the courtesy and sent him some of his

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 296. It is not quite clear who he was. Possibly, he was the ruler of Tanjore, a nominal vassal of the King of Bijapur. He later furnished troops to de la Haye during the first siege of St. Thomé. In spite of the conquest of south Carnatic by Bijapur about the middle of the 17th century, much of the country was still in the hands of unsubdued Poligars and Governors owing a mere nominal allegiance to the King of Bijapur.

officers with rich presents. The latter visited the two places offered by the local ruler, and on their return submitted a report that Tranquemennar, one of the two places visited, would be very suitable for their purpose. It was situated in the midst of a pleasant and fertile countryside and was very convenient for trade and commerce, being on a river on which even large and fully laden vessels could navigate. De la Haye sent two of his men to take possession of the place and to reside there till the establishment of a full-fledged settlement.[1]

The French were still in need of more food-stuffs and other provisions, and therefore although their intention was probably to go straight to the island of Banka, they resolved not to leave the Coromandel coast till they had obtained all the things necessary for their new enterprise. From Porto Novo the squadron proceeded up the coast in order to visit some of the other important places and buy provisions there.

### 3. *History of St. Thomé* [2]

On the 20th (July, 1672) the squadron anchored before St. Thomé (originally called Mailapur by Indians), an important commercial town on the Coromandel coast, just a little to the south of Madras. Tradition goes that the place was first brought into prominence by some Armenian merchants who came and settled there for trade and commerce and also for their

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 297. The location of the place cannot be definitely ascertained. The river mentioned by Abbé Carré might have been the Coleroon or the Cauveri.

2 For a detailed history of St. Thomé, its origin, occupation by the Portuguese and conquest by Golconda see H. D. Love—"Vestiges of Old Madras," Vol. I, pp. 286-309.

devotion to the Saint after whom the place was named. In course of time after the Portuguese had established themselves in several parts of India, many of them came and settled at this place in alliance with the Armenians. Here they constructed grand mansions and beautified the town in various other ways; and by reason of its trade and commerce St. Thomé became, within a very short time, one of the richest and most important Portuguese towns in India. There were several multi-millionaire families in the town, and the value of its commerce, at least in the early days, was immensely great. The most important merchandise consisted of fine cloth and best quality dyes. The Portuguese fortified the town on the western side, which was nearly in the same condition when the French came. But on the side of the sea they constructed a very feeble wall, about eight to ten feet high and without any bastions to defend it. The inhabitants of the town were made so arrogant and insolent by their wealth that for a long time they refused to recognise the Portuguese Viceroy at Goa and frequently sent back the Governors appointed by him. Even the Governors who were received in the town had little authority, and poisoning, murder and lawlessness produced complete anarchy.[1]

It was impossible that a government of this nature could long survive the general decadence of Portuguese power in India. The Indian Princes took advantage of the weakness of the Portuguese and made attempts to drive them out of the places which they had usurped in their territories. The fall of St. Thomé was hastened by the conquest of northern Carnatic by the king of

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. pp. 335-36.

Golconda. The commercial importance of the place and the war with the Dutch, which cut off the Portuguese from the side of the sea, were great inducements to the king of Golconda to lay siege to St. Thomé. A very powerful army was sent against it in 1661, and after a siege of seven months the town surrendered. The Portuguese received no help from Goa, and suffered a just punishment for their refusal to submit to the authority of the Viceroy. The place was then given to the General, Neknam Khan, who decided to fortify it more strongly both against foreign enemies and also against the eventuality of an internal revolution, so common in the Courts of the Deccan. He built strong walls on the side of the sea, protected by four bastions which were deemed impregnable according to the ideas of the time. He also constructed a massive gate on the western side, the materials for which were taken from the stones of several grand mansions demolished for the purpose. A permanent garrison of two to three hundred men was kept, and civilian population was not ordinarily allowed to live inside the town.[1]

### 4. *Origin of the French Design upon St. Thomé*

The French squadron anchored before St. Thomé only to procure provisions, and probably not with any pre-conceived plan of capturing the town. Yet it is curious to note that the French had their eyes upon St. Thomé from a long time back. Castonnet des Fosses

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 336-37. See also Abbé Carré —*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 297. Martin gives 1660 as the year of the capture of St. Thomé by Golconda. In the "Vestiges of Old Madras," Vol. I, p. 304, it is stated that the town surrenderd on or about 2nd May, 1662.

states that while at Surat de la Haye had heard about the importance and wealth of St. Thomé, and had thought of founding a French settlement there.[1] But the design upon the place had its origin even earlier. St. Thomé was one of the places mentioned in the despatches of Caron to the *Chambre-Générale* at Paris, as being suitable for the establishment of an independent French settlement. The secret leaked out probably through the Dutchmen employed by Caron for translation work and the Banian agent, Samson, to whom he confided all his plans. Soon all the other European nations came to know about it. Francois Martin narrates that soon after his arrival at Masulipatam in August, 1670, he was asked by William Langhorn, the newly arrived English Governor of Madras, in the course of a private conversation whether the French would shortly take up their projected plan about St. Thomé ; and upon Martin's reply that he did not know anything about the matter, Langhorn shrewdly remarked that he himself was much better informed.[2] Even before the arrival of the French squadron at Surat, the Dutch authorities at Batavia, having secret knowledge of the French design upon St. Thomé, wrote to their Governor of Pulicat to send an embassy to the Court of Golconda to ask for the cession of the town of St. Thomé or the Divi island near Masulipatam, which in the hands of a strong maritime power as the Dutch would be able to exercise a complete control over the trade and commerce of that important port. The embassy however produced no result, as the king of Golconda would not listen to any

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 100.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 301.

such proposal.[1] The Dutch were really so much alarmed about the French design upon St. Thomé that in January, 1672, they sent three battleships to Masulipatam with the ostensible object of escorting two merchant vessels from Japan, but really because of their apprehension about the appearance of the French squadron on the Coromandel coast. After a few days' stay at Masulipatam, the Dutch ships sailed for Publicat, not far from St. Thomé.[2]

### 5. *Apparent Cause of the French Attack on St. Thomé*

But whatever might have been the original design of the French upon St. Thomé which gave rise to so much apprehension among the Dutch, it is quite definite that they had no settled intention of capturing it when their squadron first appeared before that place. The French attack on St. Thomé was the result of the course of events which could not have been foreseen earlier.

After the French squadron arrived at St. Thomé, Boisseau, a clerk of the Company, who was on board the hooker which had escaped capture by the Dutch and had taken shelter at Madras, came to see de la Haye. He informed de la Haye that the letters from the Court which had fallen into the hands of the Malabar corsairs had been luckily recovered and were now lying with the Rev. Father Ephrem, Superior of the French Capuchin mission at Madras. De la Haye sent an officer to Madras to render compliments to the English Governor on his behalf and to thank him for

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 307-09.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 302-03.

the assurance of protection which he had given to the French hooker against any attack by the Dutch. This officer was also charged with bringing the letters from Father Ephrem. On the next day, the 21st July, the Governor of Madras sent an officer to de la Haye to return the compliments and to hand over a packet of letters from the French Court, brought by the English ships which had just arrived from Europe. These letters as well as the others brought from Father Ephrem contained information about the preparations of war in Europe against the Dutch. On the 22nd the captain of *Le Flamand* was sent to Madras to procure foodstuffs and also riggings and other things required for the ships of the squadron. He returned in the evening and informed de la Haye that the English were willing to render any help they could to the French.[1] This helpful attitude of the English as opposed to their later unfriendly and even hostile conduct may be explained by the fact that they did not think that the French would capture St. Thomé and establish themselves so close to Madras.

St. Thomé had been captured from the Portuguese, and the inhabitants of the town naturally had a strong distrust of Europeans (or as they were called "men with hats"). They had no grudge against the French in particular, as they had no idea about that nation as yet. They disliked Europeans in general and would not allow them to enter the town, for fear of their trying to capture it—a fear, which was quite justified in the conditions of the 17th century. So when de la Haye sent two of his officers on land on the 21st to see the Muslim Governor of St. Thomé and to ask his

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 353-54.

permission to procure water, wood and other provisions, the latter, far from rendering any help, ordered the French officers to withdraw immediately. The French were very much shocked at this incivility, but on the 22nd they made a second attempt with the Governor. This time they met with an even more insolent reply. A council of war was called on the 23rd, and de la Haye represented that national honour demanded a vigorous action against the town. All the officers were of the same opinion and it was decided to bombard the place heavily from the ships, after making a last attempt to preserve peace. The ships were brought up closer to the coast and made ready for action at the first signal.[1]

De la Haye himself took a leading part in the attack. He armed four boats in which he put about a hundred musketeers. Then getting himself in another boat together with his guards and volunteers, he advanced towards the reefs and sandbanks near the coast. The landing was extremely difficult all along the coast, and only flat wooden rafts (commonly known as Cattimarons) could be used for going ashore. De la Haye first sent two officers to make a last attempt with the Governor, but a large number of soldiers guarded the coast, and no sooner had the French officers set foot on land than they were compelled to withdraw. De la Haye immediately gave the signal to his ships, which started shelling the town furiously. Some of the Frenchmen swam ashore and brought some wooden rafts lying there, which helped the landing of troops from the boats. De la Haye himself jumped into the sea and swam ashore. The troops who had

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 354.

lined along the coast fled away in panic, and the garrison inside the town was so much alarmed at the terrific and incessant bombardment from the French ships that they immediately put up a white flag on the highest bastion overlooking the sea. That stopped shelling from the ships, but de la Haye, followed by some of his officers and guards, went round the town to find out the weak spots in its defences. When he arrived before the massive western gate, he found it still wide open, and if he had entered with a considerable body of troops, he could have made himself master of the town without much difficulty. But as he stood hesitating, the gate closed against him.[1]

The thing was that, as yet de la Haye had not made up his mind to capture the town. All that he wanted to do was simply to punish the inhabitants for their insolence and to compel them to satisfy French demands. But the first easy success changed his mind and made him inclined to seize the place in the name of the French Company. That is why when the Governor of St. Thomé sent representatives to de la Haye to ask pardon for past insults and promising to supply in future everything that the French needed, de la Haye took up a different attitude. He replied that he did not require any supply of provisions, and that he would not be satisfied with anything less than the possession of the town or at least the cost of the cannon balls fired against it, which he put at the fantastic figure of 50,000 pagodas (for 5,000 balls!). Evidently the envoys could not agree to the terms and replied that they would inform their General, Mondal Nayak, who was at that time residing in the fortress of Poonamalee.

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 355.

only about half a day's journey from St. Thomé. De la Haye demanded satisfaction within three days, failing which, he declared, he would attack and capture the town.[1]

De la Haye had been already half-persuaded by the natural advantages of the place to capture it. He was now confirmed in his decision by the arguments and solicitations of some Portuguese Paulist Fathers, who since the time the Muhammedans had captured the town had been living in the suburbs with their Christian flock. These Portuguese represented to de la Haye the ease with which the town could be seized, as the garrison defending it was very weak both in number and in armaments. Another great inducement came from the Rev. Father Ephrem, Superior of the French Capuchin mission at Madras, who wrote to de la Haye that never would Europeans find a more favourable opportunity for capturing St. Thomé, as the town had remained without its military Chief for several months. The military Governor had retired to the fortress of Poonamalee, and there was nobody of authority left in the town to organise defence. The letter also added that there was no time to lose, because the fortress of Poonamalee was only half a day's journey from St. Thomé, and if he once got a timely warning about an attack on the town, the military Governor could at once send a strong force for its defence.[2] Success, therefore, required a swift and silent blow. What hesitation there still might have

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 298.

*Ibid.*, pp. 298-99. It seems that the Governor of St. Thomé, with whom the French had negotiated, was really the commandant of the garrison, subordinate to the military Governor at Poonamalee, Mondal Nayak.

been in the mind of de la Haye was removed by the report that the inhabitants of St. Thomé had again shown some unwillingness to help the French. It is not known what they actually did, but de la Haye had already made up his mind to strike the final blow. To know the views of his officers he again called a council on the 23rd. There was a prolonged debate in which some of the officers argued that although it might be quite easy to capture the town, a permanent garrison would have to be maintained to defend it against the certain attempts of the Muhammedans to recover the place. The maintenance of a suitable garrison at St. Thomé would weaken the squadron to such an extent as to make it unfit for any other enterprise. But all hesitation on this ground was removed by the arguments of the captain of *Le Triomphe*, who declared that his ship was leaking very badly and was in no condition to put to sea again. The men and armaments of his ship could be easily utilised for garrisoning the newly-won possession. The final decision was not, however, taken till the resumed meeting of the council on the 24th.[1]

## 6. *Capture of St. Thomé*

Preparations were taken in hand at once for the attack. About three hundred well-armed troops were landed with three small field pieces, and de la Haye and Caron went themselves to lead the attack. Before leaving the squadron, they left instructions about what should be done following signals from land. At the sight of a red flag the ships were to open fire on

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 356-57.

the town which was not to cease till the signalling of a white flag. The defending garrison, either because it thought itself safe within the walls of the town or because it did not believe that the French would go to the extreme, made no attempt to oppose the landing of their troops and munitions. A warning was, however, sent to the military Governor at Poonamalee, and preparations were hastily started for the defence of St. Thomé. There were some pieces of artillery, which were placed on the bastions on the eastern side and aimed at the French ships. All the men in the town were put under arms and posted on the bastions and the walls, from where to observe the disposition and movements of the French. The latter, after having made a circuit round the town, discovered two spots suitable for attack. On the northern side there was a wall without a parapet, which it was quite easy to scale; and on the opposite side, *i.e.*, the south, there was a small door hidden in one corner of a high and fairly strong wall. An experienced General and a sound strategist as he was, de la Haye gave the impression that he wanted to deliver his main attack on this door. This was only a ruse, as will be seen later, to draw the defending garrison to the southern side, leaving the northern wall completely unprotected. The ruse succeeded, and the entire garrison, having noticed the French setting their batteries against the small door, ran there to defend that position. Throughout the night of the 24th there was a constant exchange of firing between the troops on the southern wall and the French who had taken up their position among the trees at the foot of the wall.[1]

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 300-301.

The assault was delivered on the 25th July. Francois Martin states that before taking the final step de la Haye wanted to make a last attempt with the inhabitants of St. Thomé. He ordered somebody to go and ask them whether they would have the French as friends by giving them the provisions they needed or as enemies by refusing them, but before that the inhabitants had already taken the offensive.[1] What authority Martin had for this statement we do not know, but it seems extremely improbable that at this stage de la Haye had any desire to avoid a conflict. As has been noticed already, he would no longer be satisfied with mere supplies of provisions for the squadron, but had definitely made up his mind to strike at once for the possession of the town. For the first bombardment of the town the conduct of the inhabitants was largely responsible, but for the second and the decisive conflict their conduct furnished only a sort of excuse. There were other important factors which had already determined de la Haye to attack.

On the morning of the 25th, at the sight of the expected red signal from land, the French ships opened a terrific fire on the town. Most of the defenders were on the southern side, expecting the decisive attack in that quarter, where the French were shelling the small door with their artillery. The bombardment from the ships drew a large number of them to the eastern wall. They had a few pieces of artillery on their bastions which they fired against the French ships. But they were quite unskilled and inexperienced in handling cannons, and their firing produced but little effect. The concentration of the defenders on two points only

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*, I, p. 357.

where the attack had been begun, namely the south and the east, left the northern side absolutely unprotected. This gave de la Haye the opportunity for effecting a brilliant ruse of war. He had already, on the previous night, sent two long ladders to the northern side to be kept hidden in the bushes at the foot of the wall and now when the defenders were occupied with the attacks from the south and the east, he sent de Rebrey, Captain of the Infantry, with half the forces to the unprotected northern wall. Marching through the dense wood surrounding the town, the party arrived at the foot of the wall, and with the help of the ladders successfully scaled the wall without being noticed by any of the sentinels. De Rebrey himself led the way with his sword in hand, and when once his men had got inside, he ranged them in battle formation and marched them to the centre of the town with the drums beating and the flag flying. The enemy was taken completely by surprise, and yet a large force was sent immediately to oppose the French. Although vastly superior in number, the opposing army was completely routed by a furious charge of the French musketeers, and the Muslim Commandant was taken prisoner. The French then opened the small gate on the southern side and let de la Haye and his men enter. In the ensuing panic and confusion the defenders jumped down from the top of the walls, there being no other way of escape.[1] The town was given over to pillage, but the booty was quite insignificant. After the victorious entry de la Haye hoisted the French flag on

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 301-2. In his *Relation ou Journal d'un voyage fait aux Indes Orientales* (1671-78) Francois de l'Estra gives a vivid account of the capture of St. Thomé, which agrees in all its details with that of Abbé Carré.

the highest bastion over-looking the sea, at the sight of which the ships ceased fire. About hundred and ten prisoners were taken, with twenty-two pieces of artillery and quantities of powder and balls. On the next day, the 26th July, there appeared a strong cavalry force of 800 men for the defence of the town. But having approached the place, they realised that they had come too late, and they immediately turned back with a threat to return shortly with sufficient forces.[1]

### 7. *Effects of the French Capture of St. Thomé*

St. Thomé was captured with comparative ease, but the French had given little thought to the consequence of their action. Two things had determined them to the forcible seizure of the place; first, the desire to acquire glory and honour for their nation, and second, the persuasions of the Portuguese Paulist missionaries of St. Thomé and the French Capuchins of Madras. Being moved by impulses rather than by serious reflections, the French thought that a brilliant military stroke at St. Thomé would redound to the glory and credit of their nation. But they did not stop to think how much it would weaken their squadron and make it unfit for any other enterprise. Secondly, they failed to realise that the solicitations of the Portuguese missionaries and others were actuated only by their self-interest, as they hoped to gain back their houses and property after the French had captured the town.

Even Caron forgot completely his projected plan about Banka and his promise to the king of Bantam to go and join him with a formidable force. From

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 304.

his long experience in the East, he should have realised that the possession of Banka was much more advantageous and profitable to the French than the possession of St. Thomé. Banka would have opened to the French the commerce in cloves, nutmegs and other spices which were much more lucrative than anything produced round St. Thomé. At Banka the French would have gained the alliance and protection of a powerful king and his people, and the ships of their squadron could have found a safe shelter till the arrival of re-inforcements from Europe. On the other hand the forcible seizure of St. Thomé completely ruined French trade at Masulipatam (situated as it was within the dominions of the king of Golconda), the centre of all the commerce of the Coromandel coast, Bengal and the Far East. Moreover, it drew upon the French the enmity of one of the strongest powers in south India.

The capture of St. Thomé alienated the English of Madras, who were alarmed at the prospect of rivalry from the French possession so close to their own town.[1]

[1] The alarm which the French capture of St. Thomé caused to the English at Madras is illustrated by the following extract from the "Records of Fort St. George—Diary and Consultation Book (1672-78)," pp. 9-10 :—

"[At a Consultation in Fort St. George, the 17th (27th—N.S.) July, 1672].

It being consulted about the following queries :—

1. Whether the French taking St. Thomé and rumours of wars in Europe will oblige us to any provision for the safety of the town, fort, treasure, etc., interest of the Honourable Company, the danger of the French being now much greater than even of the Hollanders.

* * *

To which it is thus answered :—

1. To the first it is unanimously answered that it is necessary to make speedy provisions, considering the taking of St. Thomé before our eyes."

From this time onwards, it became their constant endeavour to ruin the French at St. Thomé, although their hostility was not openly expressed. The Dutch were also furious, as they had begged for the cession of St. Thomé at the Court of Golconda and had been refused. It was only natural for them now to make an attempt, in alliance with Golconda, to oust the French from a place on which they themselves had an eye. But the people who felt most aggrieved at the French capture of St. Thomé were the Portuguese, who still regarded the town as lawfully belonging to them. Abbé Carré relates an interesting story about an interview he had with some of the important members of the Portuguese Viceroy's Council at Goa, when the latter complained violently against the French for having captured a town which belonged to them. Abbé Carré pointed out that the French had taken the place from the hands of Muhammedans who had been in possession of it for many years, and that after the capture they had re-established Christianity there. But no argument could prevail with the Portuguese, who insolently declared that de la Haye should have sought the permission of the Portuguese Viceroy to capture the town, which would have been granted on condition of his handing back the place to him after driving out the Muhammedans.[1] There could be no reply to such a ridiculous demand.

The French had made themselves masters of St. Thomé by an easy victory, but they were to find out later that to retain it was much more difficult. Their position at St. Thomé was precarious from the very beginning. Without any allies and still in need of

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 305.

necessary provisions, they were threatened on all sides by the forces of the powerful king of Golconda. The active enmity of the Dutch was certain and equally so was the hostility of the English, though not openly expressed. The French had most unwisely got into a tight corner from which there was no means of escape.

# CHAPTER VII

## War with Golconda and the First Siege of St. Thomé

1. Establishment of civil authority. 2. Defensive measures. 3. The Golconda army sent against St. Thomé. 4. The military situation. 5. Caron's return to Europe. 6. Problem of food provisions and munitions. 7. Relations with the English of Madras. 8. An envoy from the king of Kandy and a French mission to Pulicat. 9. Military operations.

### *1. Establishment of Civil Authority*

After the capture of St. Thomé the first task of de la Haye was to maintain peace and order in the town. On the 26th, the day after the capture, a proclamation was made forbidding anybody to create disturbances under pain of death. The French soldiers were ordered not to do any harm or injustice to the inhabitants, nor to take anything from them except on cash payment. So strict was the order of de la Haye that two soldiers, who had forcibly taken the goods of a woman coming to the market at St. Thomé, were arrested immediately and condemned to death. For the convenience of buyers and sellers, a particular place was marked as public market, where all things must be brought and sold according to the official price-list, copies of which were hung up at several important places. This was undoubtedly a good measure, but two other things done by de la Haye were not so wise and were hardly calculated to win the hearts of the local population. The first was the imposition of a rather high tax on the articles brought for sale from outside. The small

amount collected showed clearly how it was taken by the people. The second was the striking of "fanams" (a kind of money current in the country) at St. Thomé, which were not accepted outside.[1] It caused a good deal of inconvenience to the people who came to sell their goods at St. Thomé. No doubt the English also used to strike coins at Madras, but their position was different and their coins were accepted even outside the town. They were already well-established on the Coromandel coast and were widely known to the people of the country, whereas the French were just new-comers.

De la Haye next turned to the task of compiling a detailed account of the condition of the town and of the territories and dependencies belonging to it, for which purpose a special Commissar was appointed. The place still bore marks of its old splendour and beauty, with its wide streets and grand mansions; but most of these were in ruins due to the negligent policy of the Muhammedans. The Portuguese and Indian Christians, who had been living in the outskirts of St. Thomé since its capture by the Muhammedans, now came back and occupied some of the best houses in the town on the pretext that they had formerly belonged to them. In order to avoid any future difficulty arising from these hasty and unauthorised occupations, de la Haye made a proclamation calling upon the inhabitants to give their names, occupations and claims to the French Commissar.[2] The Portuguese Paulist missionaries were allowed to take possession of their house and Church which were still in a fairly good condition, as was also the magnificent monastery of St. Dominique

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 386.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 386-87.

which had been preserved almost in its entirety. The Cathedral Church, dedicated to the Apostle St. Thomas, was completely untouched, and the Muhammedans, who had been in possession of the town for more than ten years, had never pillaged it, nor even opened its doors, probably for the veneration in which the memory of the Apostle was held in these parts. All its ornaments libraries of Latin and Portuguese books, altars and other sacred places full of beautiful and holy relics were still found just in the same condition in which they had been left by the Portuguese.[1]

## 2. *Defensive Measures*

De la Haye realised from the very beginning that although the capture of St. Thomé was an easy task, to retain it was a much more difficult one and would require all the best efforts of the French. Immediately after capturing the town, therefore, he took all possible care to put it in a proper state of defence. The walls on the western side, which were in a dilapidated condition at places, were quickly repaired and strengthened. The old bastions, which were in a perfectly good condition, were re-named by the French, who constructed a few more and also some advanced redoubts outside the walls. Neither Martin nor Abbé Carré gives details about the fortifications. But there is a fairly accurate plan of St. Thomé about the year 1674, made by Francois Valentyn and reproduced in the "Vestiges of Old Madras." The details of this plan fully agree with the description given by de l'Estra, who was at St.

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 303.

Thomé during the siege, in his "*Relation ou Journal d'un Voyage fait aux Indes Orientales* (1671-78)." [1]

In order to provide the bastions with sufficient artillery all the guns were removed from the condemned vessel, *Le Triomphe*, and large quantities of munitions and provisions were also brought down from the ships in anticipation of a prolonged siege. The French forces, considerably reduced by past losses, were re-inforced by the addition of some Portuguese gunners, but still the problem of finding sufficient number of troops was very acute. Nothing much could be hoped from the Portuguese inhabitants of the town, who were much too fond of pleasure and voluptuousness to have any taste for war. Before the capture of St. Thomé they had offered their services to the French only for the purpose of regaining their houses and property. But as soon as they heard about the coming of a strong Golconda army, most of them retired to Madras

[1] H. D. Love,—*Vestiges of Old Madras*, Vol. I, pp. 312-13. (Valentyn's Plan of St. Thomé faces, p. 309.) We can form a good idea of the strength of the fortifications of St. Thomé. The southern gateway was flanked by two Bastions, "De la Haye" and "Caron," the first being to the east of the second. The Bastion at the south-west angle of the town was named "Colbert," and beyond it were two outworks, "Marin" and "Portugais." The massive western gateway was defended by the Bastion "Porte Royale." At the north-western angle of the newer (extended) fortifications was the Bastion "St. Louis," and beyond it was a redoubt. The Bastion "Soleil" was at the north-western angle of the older fortifications. The north face was defended by the Bastion named "De Rebrey." At the north-east and south-east angles of the town were the Bastions "Dauphin" and "L'Admiral," respectively. The sea-gate at the middle of the east face was defended by a Bastion named "Bourbon." It was flanked by the Bastions "François" on the north and "Major" on the south. Beyond the south-eastern angle was the advanced redoubt "Fort Sans Peur" on the bank of the river. St. Thomé was, in fact, much better fortified than any other place on the Coromandel coast, specially Madras;—see "Records of Fort St. George—Diary and Consultation Book (1672-78)," p. 19. (Consultation, 2nd February, 1674).

to save themselves, and some even took the road to Goa.[1] In his great difficulty de la Haye turned to two persons who had shown themselves friends of the French, namely, the local ruler who had granted Tranquemennar and the Governor of Porto Novo. The former sent more than five hundred Hindu soldiers, very hardy and skilful in warfare. On their arrival at St. Thomé, they were organised and trained in the French fashion. The Governor of Porto Novo also sent some soldiers and large quantities of munitions and foodstuffs.[2] But in spite of the substantial help from these two sources, the French were still in need of more troops, munitions and provisions.

### 3. *The Golconda Army sent against St. Thomé*

Immediately upon the news of the capture of St. Thomé, preparations were set on foot in Golconda for the despatch of a formidable force to recover the place. The king of Golconda, Abul-l-Hasan Qutb Shah, who had succeeded Abdullah Qutb Shah in 1672, sent orders to all his provinces for levying troops, and "the whole kingdom resounded with the trumpets of cavalry and the clang of arms."[3] Deadly pieces of artillery, 120, 60, 48, 36 and 18-pounders were put on carriages dragged by elephants, to be used in effecting breaches in the walls of St. Thomé. At the head of the forces were put three of the best Generals in the kingdom, Baba Sahib, Mondal Nayak and Trimbak Bussora

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 307.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 304.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

Raju.[1] The first one was Muhammedan and the other two were Hindus. Baba Sahib was placed above the other two generals, but each of them had a separate army and a separate plan of operations, which was a common feature in Indian warfares in those days. It is not possible to ascertain definitely the numerical strength of the Golconda forces. Abbé Carré states in one place that there were 50,000 men in all, but in another place he puts the figure at 60,000.[2] Martin gives a much lower figure, 6,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry.[3] Probably Martin gives the correct number of the regular combatant forces, and Abbé Carré's figure includes all the camp-followers, servants, musicians, dancers and such other non-combatant and mostly useless persons. It was a regular feature in a Muslim army, while on campaign, to have four or five non-combatants to every combatant, which was one of the principal sources of its weakness. These useless persons catered to the luxury and voluptuous passions of the soldiers, and in the event of the slightest military setback they were the first people to spread panic and confusion in the camp. The existence of a very large number of useless persons in the Golconda army on the present occasion is confirmed by the fact that when de la Haye sent an envoy to the camp of Baba Sahib he

[1] The name of the second General is given by Abbé Carré as Montelnaik, and by Martin as Moudelnaique. The third General is called Bouzoura by Abbé Carré, and Trimourcoursouraja by Martin. He was certainly Trimbak Bussora Raju;—see "Vestiges of Old Madras," Vol. I, p. 322 (foot-note 4). In the "Records of Fort St. George—Diary and Consultation Book, 1672-78," p. 16 (Consultation, 1st August, 1673), there is a mention of Triamback Bussora, the Moorish General, who was paid 150 pagodas by the English to prevent any disturbance to their trade and commerce by the Golconda army besieging St. Thomé.

[2] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 306 and 308.

[3] *Mémoires de François Martin*, I, p. 393.

was received and " entertained with the music of a thousand instruments, and with a large number of courtesans and buffoons, who were more suitable to be kept in luxurious towns and peaceful places than in a camp full of blood, terror and frightful machines of war." [1] The real meaning of the enormous number of fifty to sixty thousand men given by Abbé Carré may then be easily understood.

### *4. The Military Situation*

Still the army sent by the king of Golconda was a formidable one, considering the handful of French and other soldiers defending St. Thomé. Early in August (1672) the Golconda army appeared on the plains between St. Thomé adn Madras, and pitched its tent along the river flowing down Madras.[2] For the French the military situation was really grave. It was not possible for them to go out for an open battle on the plains against such numerically superior forces. On the other hand it was very dangerous to remain on the defensive, relying only on the strength of the walls and the fire from the bastions. It would only allow the enemy to draw the coils closer round the town. The Golconda army could easily stop supplies from the south, west and north, and could thus simply starve the town into submission. Strong corps of guards were posted on the route between Madras and St. Thomé along the sea beach, cutting off all communications between the two towns. A vigilant watch was kept at all river crossings, and bodies of horsemen were sent to explore the countryside round St. Thomé to see the disposition

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 326.

2 Possibly it was the river now called Cuum, almost a backwater.

of the French and the fortifications and other defence works they had built outside the town. The Golconda army had a two-fold plan, first, to cut off all supplies from the besieged town, and second, to advance as far as possible under cover of the entrenchments which it constructed, and to bring its deadly artillery into action to effect breaches in the walls. The defenders could reply to the first by making as much use as possible of the sea-route which was still open; and to the second by making constant sorties to hamper and when possible to destroy the entrenchments and mines which the besieging army was pushing forward every day. In order to understand the military operations, which will be described later, it is necessary to remember these four factors.

### 5. *Caron's return to Europe*

De la Haye and Caron had most thoughtlessly risked everything on the capture of St. Thomé, but they soon had to give serious reflections to their position. They were surrounded by powerful forces on all sides, and only the sea-route was open for sending men to seek help from outside. They had only a small number of men, and their money, munitions and food stocks were wholly insufficient to stand any prolonged siege. Nothing could be hoped from the English at Madras, because although they were allies in Europe, in India they had good reason to refuse any help to the French. Nor any better result could be expected from an appeal to the Directors of the Company at Surat, who were against the naval expedition from the very beginning and had resolved not to supply anything to the squadron. Towards the end of September (1672), therefore, when

it became apparent that if any help was to be expected it must come from Europe, Caron persuaded de la Haye to send him back to France to present before the king and the *Chambre-Générale* the state of things in India and the urgent need of sending help and re-inforcements to the squadron. He had another important motive for wishing to go back to France, to complain to the *Chambre-Générale* against the insults and injustices which he claimed to have received from the other Directors at Surat.[1] Caron was given the ship *Le Julles* for the voyage.

But it was realised that the voyage would be of a long duration and that the help to be expected from France could arrive only much later. De la Haye, therefore, decided to try the Directors of the Company at Surat, urging them in the name of the king and the interests of the Company to send promptly all the help they could. The hooker *Le St. Louis* commanded by Chanlatte, was selected for the voyage to Surat. Herpin, formerly captain of the ship *Le St. Jean de Baptiste*, who was entrusted with carrying some letters to the French Court, was sent to Surat from where he was to take the overland route to France. Caron, who for reasons best known to him did not wish to take his gold plates and other precious moveables with him, sent them by the hooker to Surat to his eldest son whom he had left there. He did not know that soon after his departure from Surat, his son had also left the place to return to France by the overland route.

Both the ships sailed from St. Thomé on the 2nd October together with some others sent to Porto Novo

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 312.

to procure provisions. *Le Julles* and *Le St. Louis* met with almost the same fate and did not reach their destinations. *Le Julles,* which was carrying a very rich cargo of Eastern merchandise, after having made a successful voyage to Europe, was wrecked on some rocky islands almost within sight of the port of Lisbon. The other ship was compelled by the stress of weather to put into port at Colombo, where she was seized by the Dutch and all the men on board were made prisoners. The plates of gold and silver and other precious moveables belonging to Caron were taken by the Dutch Admiral, Rijcklof van Goens, who humourously observed that they were presents to him from one who had been an old servant of the Dutch Company.[1] Martin, however, gives a different story. He says that the officers of *Le St. Louis* were really in league with the Dutch. They were treated very well and were allowed to share among themselves the rich moveables of Caron. Afterwards they were sent to Surat on board a Dutch vessel.[2] The harm done by the disaster which befell these two ships could not be measured merely by the loss of men and valuable cargo, but by the fact that neither the Directors of the Company at Surat nor the higher authorities in Paris could get timely information about the state of affairs at St. Thomé and could not therefore send any help so urgently needed there.

The end of Caron is shrouded in mystery. His strange policy down to the departure of the squadron from Trinkomali roused suspicion about his honesty, and the intimate relations between him and de la Haye cooled down to such a point that the latter openly ac-

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 313.
[2] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 413.

cused him of being in league with the Dutch. Moreover, Caron had too many enemies in India, and persistent complaints against him had reached the *Chambre-Générale* in Paris. The authorities of the Company came to believe in the accusations of fraud and treachery brought against him, and they wanted to recall him to France for an examination of his accounts. Even Colbert, who had been formerly a great patron of Caron, now sided with his enemies, and fearing that he would not come if peremptorily recalled he invited him to France for consultation about some new enterprise. On his side, Caron, who had no inkling yet of what was passing in Paris, had no more interest to remain in India in the service of the Company after his supremacy at Surat was gone, and was eager to return to France. It was only after passing Gibraltar that Caron came to know all about the conspiracy against him. He then proceeded towards Lisbon, but his career was cut short by a ship-wreck within sight of the port.[1]

Kaeppelin is inclined to think that Caron became more definitely pro-Dutch in sympathies after receiving news of the declaration of war in Europe, although he does not believe in the accusation of de la Haye that Caron had accepted Dutch gold. He even suggests in a veiled manner that the attack on St. Thomé was a piece of deliberate mischief, committed with the object of ruining French interests in India. When the Golconda army laid siege to St. Thomé, Caron realised that the French had been placed in a sufficiently compromising position, and he therefore decided to return to France as early as possible, so as not to be present at the time of the final disaster and to be able to free himself from all

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 101.

responsibility. De la Haye also readily agreed to Caron's departure for Europe, as he was eager to get rid of a counsellor whose advice had been so fatal to French interests, and against whom he now entertained a strong suspicion of being bribed by the Dutch.[1]

It is not possible yet to pass any definite judgment on Caron, as so many things about him are still open to controversy. It is true that during his stay in India, Caron worked not merely for the good of the Company he served, but had a very keen eye to his own interests and had amassed great wealth by means which cannot be called fair. It is true that he was of an autocratic, proud and vindictive nature. But this much also must be admitted that if there was any single person who built up French trade and commerce in the East, it was Caron. It is true that his strange advice on every occasion paralysed the action of de la Haye and proved fatal to the French naval expedition. He has therefore been freely accused of treachery. But was he a traitor? Probably not. He was guided only by his personal interests and his strong love of power. He wanted to be the supreme authority in his sphere, and could brook no opposition or rivalry. He gave up the interests of the French Company just for the same reason for which he had previously abandoned the Dutch service.

### 6. *Problem of Food Provisions and Munitions*

As has been described already, the Golconda forces had surrounded St. Thomé on the south, west and north, leaving only the sea-route on the east open. Supplies of provisions and munitions could be brought into

1 Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, pp. 95-98.

the town only by this route. Within the first few days of the siege the English at Madras had begun to show great unwillingness to help the French in any way, and later on their superficial neutrality deepened into subtle hostility. There remained on the Coromandel coast only three places from where supplies could be obtained, the Danish settlement at Tranquebar, and Porto Novo and Pondicherry, both belonging to the king of Bijapur. The Danes and the Governor of Porto Novo had already shown their friendliness for the French. Sher Khan Lody, in whose territory Pondicherry was situated, was quite willing to help the French, with whom he had been in correspondence since 1670 about his offer of a suitable place in his dominions for establishing a settlement. De la Haye decided to appeal to these three friendly neighbours, and on the 2nd October three ships, *Le Breton*, *La Diligente*, and the *Ruby*, the last being a small English merchant-vessel captured sometime before, were sent to Tranquebar, with orders to stop at Porto Novo and Pondicherry on the return voyage, to procure provisions and munitions for the relief of the besieged town.[1] The other two ships which remained in the roadstead of St. Thomé, *Le Flamand* and *La Sultanne*, were also subsequently sent for the same purpose. Several times were these ships employed for carrying supplies to St. Thomé. From Tranquebar and Pondicherry the French obtained mostly provisions, but from Porto Novo they got munitions and troops as well. These troops were quite considerable in number to form several companies. They were given red head wears for distinction, and being organised and trained on the French model, this army

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, 1, p. 394.

of Indian (mostly Hindu) troops soon became a formidable fighting force.[1]

It is interesting to note that it was through these efforts to procure provisions and munitions for the besieged garrison at St. Thomé that the foundation of the French settlement at Pondicherry was first laid.[2] Sher Khan Lody, the Governor of the province of Cuddalore belonging to the kingdom of Bijapur, had offered Pondicherry to the French for the establishment of a settlement as early as 1670. Soon after the capture of St. Thomé by the French Sher Khan Lody wrote friendly letters to de la Haye and renewed his invitation to the French to establish a settlement at Pondicherry. De la Haye, on his side, was anxious to maintain friendly relations with Sher Khan Lody and readily accepted the offer, not so much for establishing a settlement as for procuring provisions and munitions for the relief of St. Thomé. Early in August, 1672 he sent one of his guards to Pondicherry for the purpose, who remained there for two months. Then in November, he sent Bellanger de l'Espinay to Sher Khan Lody for establishing closer relations and getting more help from him. Bellanger de l'Espinay was received with great honour by Sher Khan Lody at his capital, Valikandapuram, and it was at this interview (December, 1672) that the latter made a formal declaration of granting Pondicherry to the French, to the great surprise of de l'Espinay and a Dutch merchant who was also present on the occasion. Bellanger de l'Espinay arrived at Pondicherry on the 4th February,

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 400. See also Abbé Carré, p. 312.

[2] Labernadie—*Le Vieux Pondichéry* (1673-1815), pp. 9-10. For an account of the foundation of Pondicherry see *Mémoires de Bellanger de l'Espinay Vendomois sur son voyage aux Indes Orientales* (1670-75) and Froidevaux—*Les débuts de l'occupation francaise à Pondichéry* (1672-74).

1673, and from that time dates the connection of the French with the place which was destined to become the capital of French India. Bellanger de l'Espinay, however, was concerned only with procuring provisions and munitions for the relief of St. Thomé. The real founder of the French settlement at Pondicherry was Francois Martin.

Besides the ordinary method of purchasing provisions from friendly ports, the French took resort to another method also, not so honest though, to solve their acute food problem. Whenever they had an opportunity, they captured ships laden with food grains irrespective of their nationality. At the beginning of November, (1672) a small English boat, laden with grains and other provisions and proceeding from Madras to Ceylon, was stopped by the French ship *Le Flamand* and relieved of half the cargo.[1] It did not do much harm to the English, nor did the French profit much by this little act of piracy, but it needlessly embittered the relations between them more than ever. Then in January, 1673, a small Danish ship, coming from Bengal, was stopped by the French while she was passing off St. Thomé and taken into port. The ship was fully laden with provisions which were forcibly removed by the French, and although they paid good price for the things taken, the Danes of Tranquebar, who had given so much friendly help, were naturally shocked at this high-handed and almost treacherous act of the French. In the same month a Portuguese boat, coming from Madras, was seized and relieved of her cargo.[2] On the 21st February another small ship, belonging to some Muhammedan merchants and coming

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 398.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 330.

from Bengal with a very rich merchandise, was sequestrated at St. Thomé and her captain put into prison. On the 6th March de la Haye received a letter from Sher Khan Lody that the captured ship belonged to him, upon which the Captain was immediately released and the ship allowed to proceed on her voyage.[1] It is true that the French, surrounded by enemies on all sides, were faced with an acute shortage of provisions and munitions. But these little acts of piracy did them more harm than good, as they needlessly alienated their erstwhile friends.

The scarcity of provisions at St. Thomé was relieved to a little extent by the surreptitious supplies sent by some Christian women of Madras, evading the general restrictions of the English and the strict watch kept by the Golconda forces. Abbé Carré pays a glowing tribute to these women, who in their passionate love for the gallant French soldiers took all possible risks to send supplies to their sweethearts in the besieged town.[2] But here, as in so many other places, Abbé Carré's statement is a pure exaggeration, the result of his blind admiration for men of his own race, which made him think that the whole world must love and fear the French. As a matter of fact, the help sent by the lovelorn women of Madras could not certainly have been so considerable as Abbé Carré would have us believe.

### 7. *Relations with the English of Madras*

The attitude of the English of Madras towards the French had been at the beginning not unfriendly. Even

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 419-20 and 425.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 319-20.

after the capture of St. Thomé, the Governor of Madras had sent two senior members of his Council to congratulate de la Haye on his brilliant victory and offering him full co-operation.[1] But when the Golconda forces laid siege to St. Thomé, the attitude of the English changed and became definitely unfriendly. There were three principal reasons for this change: first, the needless irritation of English susceptibilities by the capture of two of their ships; second, the fear of an attack by the Golconda army; and third, commercial jealousy against the French. The third one was probably the most important. Even Martin, who is not so bitter against the English for their unfriendly attitude as Abbé Carré, is constrained to remark that the real reason for the conduct of the English was that "our neighbourhood so close to their settlement did not please them."[2] The English were fully roused to the danger of commercial rivalry from the French settlement at St. Thomé, and were determined to ruin them by every possible means short of declaring open hostility, which they could not, because of the Anglo-French alliance in Europe against the Dutch.

The pillage of a small English ship proceeding from Madras to Ceylon has already been noticed. But even before that, in August, 1672, the English of Madras were shocked at the capture of another ship, the *Ruby*, belonging to a wealthy, private merchant named Jearsey. The latter, who had been formerly in the service of the English Company and had been the Chief of the English settlement at Masulipatam, but had later resigned his post, had given great offence to the Governor of Madras by his arrogant behaviour and re-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 386.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 412.

fusal to recognise his authority. The ship, which was richly laden and bound for Achin, lay anchored in the roadstead of St. Thomé, when the French squadron arrived there. The English Governor of Madras wrote to de la Haye that since Jearsey was in league with the Dutch and since his ship had neither any commission nor passport, the French were at liberty to seize her. He had his motive for this, as he expected Jearsey to come to him for help in recovering his ship and then be compelled to submit to his authority. De la Haye had the ship seized, and the merchandise worth twelve to fifteen hundred livres was sequestrated. Sometime later, the English Governor, at the solicitations of Jearsey, wrote to de la Haye to release the ship, which the latter refused to do. De la Haye had no intention of being made a mere instrument for the satisfaction of the personal feelings of the English Governor, and he declared that the ship was a good and legitimate prize.[1] The English of Madras, who did not know anything about the secret correspondence of their Governor, were naturally furious at this lawless action of the French. Even Abbé Carré who gives the story of the capture of the English ship does not know anything about the secret correspondence of the English Governor,[2] which is given only by Francois Martin. But assuming that Martin's statement is quite true, de la Haye should have realised the folly of giving needless irritation to the English. Good relations with them were worth much more than a ship or two.

These needless irritations combined with commercial jealousy decided the English not to help the French in any way; and what gave them a better excuse to

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 389-90.
[2] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 306.

adopt a definitely unfriendly attitude was the fear of the Golconda army. Any break with the king of Golconda was detrimental to the interests of their Company, and moreover, Madras had then but poor defences to resist the attack of a formidable army like the one which had laid siege to St. Thomé. The English therefore naturally hesitated to help their French neighbours for fear of drawing upon themselves the fury of the army sent against the French. In August there arrived an envoy from the king of Golconda to the Governor of Madras, with a present of dress, customary in Muslim Courts, and a letter from the king appealing to the traditional friendship between him and the English and forbidding them to supply anything to the French. There was an open threat also in the letter that if the English gave harbour to any Frenchman in Madras or if they sold anything to the French, they would draw upon themselves the same forces that were being engaged against St. Thomé. After such a clear threat it is not surprising that on the very next day the English Governor made a proclamation throughout the town forbidding the inhabitants to sell anything to the French and prohibiting the entrance of any Frenchman into Madras Thus a great source of supply of provisions for the besieged town was closed, and what loopholes were there left were completely stopped by the rigid watch of the Golconda guards posted on the road from Madras to St. Thomé. It may appear from the account of the embassy that the English were really not unwilling to send supplies to the French and that they were prevented from doing so only by the threat of the king of Golconda. But in fact the English were deeply alarmed at the prospect of commercial rivalry from St. Thomé and had already shown their unwillingness to help the be-

sieged town in any way. Even the embassy from the Court of Golconda was probably sent at the instance of the English to serve as an eye-wash. Abbé Carré gives out a story that there had already been a sort of understanding between the English and the generals of the Golconda army besieging St. Thomé, and that it was at the request of the English themselves and in order to give them a better excuse for refusing help to the French, that the Golconda generals had written to the Court to send an official embassy to Madras in the way in which it had been done.[1] The story may be true for two reasons. First, the English who were allies of the French in Europe really wanted a good excuse for their unfriendly attitude. Second, if the English had been cowed down merely by a threat of the king of Golconda, they could have remained content with only stopping all supplies to St. Thomé. But they went even further and secretly helped the Golconda forces with munitions and valuable military advice.

News had already reached both the English and the French in India about the outbreak of war in Europe in which they were fighting as allies against the Dutch. In order to draw the English closer and get their full co-operation de la Haye wrote to the Governor of Madras on the 20th January, 1673, suggesting the holding of a joint conference to make concerted plans against the common enemy, the Dutch. De la Haye offered to meet the English Governor at any place he liked. But on the 21st, the Governor of Madras replied to de la Haye's letter, politely excusing himself from the proposed conference on the ground that it would give offence to the king of Golconda.[2] It is true that any co-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 306-7.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 409.

operation with the French would have cost the English the loss of good relations with the king of Golconda, but that was not the whole reason for their refusal. The English were following a very diabolical policy at this time. They noticed that the prolongation of the siege and the tremendous daily losses suffered by the Golconda forces had made them tired of the war against the French and inclined to negotiate. Negotiations at that stage, which would surely have led to the cession of St. Thomé to the French, would have been detrimental to English interests. So on the 19th January, the Governor of Madras wrote to de la Haye that he had received information about the departure of twenty English and an equal number of French ships from Europe and that they would shortly arrive in Indian waters. But de la Haye understood the game, that it was only intended to make the French disinclined to negotiate with the Court of Golconda.[1]

In spite of the definitely cold attitude of the English, de la Haye did not cease trying to draw them closer. On the 27th January, he sent Francois Martin [2] to Madras with a letter of civility to the English Governor. Martin was charged with two tasks, to persuade the Governor to hold a joint conference and to procure munitions from the English. The Governor of Madras received him very reluctantly and told him that in spite of all his best intentions for the French, he could under no circumstances break with the king of Golconda, which would be the inevitable result of a joint conference. He added that as regards sale of munitions,

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 408.

2 Formerly Chief of the French settlement at Masulipatam. We shall see later the abandonment of that settlement and the arrival of Martin at St. Thomé.

it was a question which concerned only the officers of the ships. Martin asked the officers, and they wanted time to think over the matter.[1] He returned to St. Thomé on the 29th and came back to Madras on the 1st February to know the decision of the ships' officers. The latter at first excused themselves on the plea that since they had a war with the Dutch they could not spare any munitions at all, but later they added that they could not help the French in any way because of their unfriendly attitude, particularly in the matter of the capture of the English ship, the *Ruby*.[2]

With all the help in money, munitions and military advice which the English rendered to the Golconda army, the latter was compelled to raise the siege of St. Thomé in March (1673), as will be described later. This naturally displeased the English very much, but the Governor of Madras, wishing to maintain the appearance of friendly relations with the French, wrote to de la Haye congratulating him on his brilliant success. De la Haye replied by sending two of his officers to Madras to thank the Governor for his courtesy.[3] Moreover, since the Golconda army had withdrawn, the English had no more excuse to prevent the inhabitants of Madras from going to St. Thomé to sell food-stuffs and other things. They therefore adopted a new method to weaken the French, namely, by causing desertions in their ranks. French officers and soldiers often went to Madras for diversion, smartly dressed and armed. The English Governor gave orders to all keepers of cabarets to induce these Frenchmen to spend their all, even to the extent of selling their coats and arms. Reduced to

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 410-12.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 414.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 433.

such extremities, these reckless fellows fell easy victims to the wily persuasions and illusory promises of the English, Dutch and Muhammedan agents of whom the town was full.[1] The danger became so great for the French that de la Haye was compelled to make a proclamation prohibiting anybody to go out of St. Thomé without a written permission, but still the list of deserters went on increasing.

Immediately after the raising of the siege, de la Haye sent some troops to occupy a big temple at Triplicane, about half-way between Madras and St. Thomé,[2] in order to keep the communications between the two towns safe and free. De la Haye was in the habit of exploring the neighbouring countryside which gave great alarm to the English. The Governor of Madras wrote to him on the 15th March (1673) not to extend French authority over the villages neighbouring to Triplicane, which he claimed as belonging to the English Company, in spite of the fact that in a letter written much earlier he had expressly stated that the English possession did not extend beyond the town of Madras. De la Haye replied that he would undertake nothing against the English possessions and would preserve only those territories which had been acquired by French arms. This was an indirect refusal to the claim of the English Governor, and on the 17th a number of French troops were sent to Triplicane to protect it against the English, who were suspected of planning to seize the place.[3]

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 345-46.

2 It was the Parthasarathi Temple of Triplicane;—see "Vestiges of Old Madras", Vol. I, p. 322 (foot-note 2).

3 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 434-35. The following extract from the *Vestiges of Old Madras*, Vol. I, p. 325 (foot-note 2) is interesting as showing the validity of English claims. "Martin's observation illustrates the prevailing belief that Triplicane was at this period not only outside

### 8. *An Envoy from the King of Kandy and a French Mission to Pulicat*

Before we go into the details of the military operations of the siege, we may pause to notice here two events, first, the arrival of an envoy from the king of Kandy, and second, the sending of a French mission to the Dutch settlement at Pulicat. The Dutch had spread the rumour in Ceylon that they had completely destroyed the French squadron, which made the king of Kandy send an envoy to St. Thomé in February, 1673, to know the real state of things. The Ceylonese envoy assured de la Haye that the French ambassadors at the Court of Kandy were quite safe and sound.[1]

On the 18th March, 1673, de la Haye sent a mission, consisting of Francois Martin and des Cartes, a king's officer, to Pavillon, the Dutch Commander of Pulicat, which was only at a short distance from St. Thomé. The ostensible object of the mission was to protest against the bad treatment meted out to the French prisoners of war at Batavia, from whom de la Haye had received letters of complaint, in violation of the terms of capitulation, and also to request the Dutch to set these prisoners free. But the real object was to notice the disposition of the Dutch and to see if any arrangement could be arrived at to eliminate hostilities in India, although the two nations were at war in Europe. The French officers were very cordially received at Pulicat. The Dutch Commander there explained that it was not within his authority either to set

the limits of Madras, but beyond the sphere of British influence. Langhorn, however, asserted that it had been Company's territory prior to the Portuguese evacuation of St. Thomé. Neknam Khan's Cowle of 1672 certainly restored the village to British control."

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 417-18.

the French prisoners free or to come to any arrangement for maintaining peace with the French in India.[1] The Dutch were however full of civility and courtesy, and after being sumptuously entertained for two days, the French officers returned to St. Thomé. But in spite of this appearance of friendship, the Dutch were secretly intriguing at the same time at the Court of Golconda for laying a second siege to St. Thomé, promising to give all possible help by sea. They were the greatest enemies of the French in India, and we shall see in the next Chapter the course of their negotiations at the Court of Golconda.

### 9. *Military Operations*

We have already seen the arrival of the Golconda forces on the plains before St. Thomé. The three generals encamped separately, Mondal Nayak, the most enterprising among them, occupying a position in advance of the others. De la Haye, who had secret agents in the countryside, received information on the 9th August about the isolated position of Mondal Nayak's army, and he decided to deliver a swift and surprise attack at night. The French were at a great disadvantage in numerical strength, and the only way of stopping the advance of the Golconda forces was to surprise them under cover of darkness when the real number of the attackers could not be ascertained. The side which could give the first hard knock would gain a great initial advantage. Taking with him about six hundred men including sailors and Indian troops, de la Haye started from the town about two o'clock in the morning

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 435-36; see also Abbé Carré pp. 347-48.

of the 10th. A Portuguese inhabitant of St. Thomé acted as guide, but the roads were difficult, being intersected at many points by two rivers. The guide lost his way several times in the darkness of the night, and by the time de la Haye and his party arrived at the advanced Golconda camp, the first flash of dawn had already appeared in the eastern sky. The French delivered their attack immediately, and their furious charge created a terrible confusion and panic in the camp. De la Haye's only object was to give the enemy a taste of French fighting, and as soon as that was achieved he rallied his forces and brought them back in perfect order to St. Thomé.

The Golconda generals, now made cautious by the surprise attack, advanced together and encamped on an advantageous position just outside the suburbs of the town. Their plan was to give a frontal assault upon the town from the west and their advance detachments occupied some of the streets and houses of the suburbs. Under cover of these shelters they brought their battery nearer the walls of the town in order to shell the Royal Gate. But they were yet too far away, and the shelling from their battery for two days produced but little effect. The English of Madras gave them secret advice to erect an entrenchment up to the height of the walls and within a closer range of the Royal Gate, from where their battery would have the desired effect. De la Haye, being warned about their plan, made vigorous attempts to prevent the approach of the enemy forces and the construction of their entrenchment by opening a ceaseless fire from the artillery on the bastions and by making constant sorties. The French also undertook to raze to the ground all the houses in the suburbs which could be used as suitable covers by the Golconda troops.

as well as a large number of tall trees which blocked the way for artillery fire. For nearly two months not a day passed without skirmishes and armed encounters, in which the French showed their traditional bravery and courage. But what gave them a tremendous advantage over the Golconda forces was the superiority of their arms. Fire-arms, particularly of small and handy types, were not much in use in India in the seventeenth century, and the pistols, fire-balls and hand-grenades of the French wrought such havoc among their enemies and inspired such awe in them that they never had the courage or confidence to stand up to a party of French troops much smaller in number. At last after suffering a terrible loss of men the Golconda generals decided to recede from their advance position in the suburbs of the town back to their camps, fortified by walls and trenches and outside the range of the French artillery.

But the Golconda army had not given up its determination to fight on, only the plan was changed. Instead of needlessly exposing itself to the dreadful artillery fire of the French and vigorous sorties from the town, it decided to erect strong entrenchments from the base and carry them steadily right up to the wall of the besieged town. It had the advantage of number and by the beginning of November (1672) the Golconda forces had sufficiently advanced to be able to make use of their battery, now under the strong cover of entrenchments, against the Royal Gate. Still no amount of shelling could produce any tangible effect, as the wall on this side was twenty feet thick and constructed of huge stones. To the shelling from the Golconda battery the French replied with their guns from the bastion defending the gate, but they realised that their position was becoming perilous every day as the Golconda forces pushed on their

entrenchments. De la Haye, therefore decided to make a vigorous sortie to destroy the entrenchments and to drive the attackers far back from the walls of the town.

On Saturday, the 5th November (1672) de la Haye left the town an hour before daybreak, accompanied by his guards, hundred French musketeers, three hundred Indian troops and about a hundred and fifty French sailors. Leaving orders to all the bastions on the western side to open a continuous fire upon the Golconda forces to prevent the approach of their cavalry, de la Haye quietly led his party to the foot of the advance entrenchments, without being noticed by any of the sentinels. The grenadiers were the first to climb, and their petards and fire-balls created such havoc and confusion among the Golconda forces, who were all asleep, that a large number of them were killed on the spot, and the rest took to flight abandoning all their arms and equipments. After this initial success the French delivered a furious charge upon the main body of the Golconda army and pushed it with such force and vigour that it fled away in a disorderly rout. In their blind enthusiasm the French pushed on in pursuit of the fugitive army, but since de la Haye's main object was only to capture and destroy the entrenchments near the town, he rallied his men, not without some difficulty, and put them to the work of demolishing the entrenchments. After a time the Golconda army came back to the attack, and was again routed with heavy losses. It attacked twice more, but with no better result. After the final repulse of the Golconda forces and the destruction of their entrenchments, the French returned to St. Thomé in the evening. They had undoubtedly achieved a great success. In the course of a single day the Golconda forces had been driven away from near the walls of St.

Thomé, and all their entrenchments, the work of nearly three months' hard and constant labour, had been destroyed. The French suffered few casualties, but the Golconda army lost heavily.[1] In the entrenchments were found a number of ladders, which had probably been kept for a general assault. There were also discovered two mines which had already been carried to some distance.

The Golconda generals realised that it was a very tough business to take the town from the western side. They therefore explored the possibilities of attacking from the south or from the north, but the prospects appeared even worse there. The approaches to the town from the southern side were defended by a redoubt named "*Fort Sans Peur*," which overlooked a river and commanded the route to the sea. There was a strong garrison in the fort with six pieces of artillery. On the north, besides the four bastions which defended this side, there was again an encircling river which served as an important line of defence. It was therefore much more difficult to deliver an attack either from the north or from the south, and the Golconda generals again concentrated their efforts on the western side.[2] Their first entrenchments had been captured and destroyed. They began the work anew, undaunted by the constant skirmishes and sorties of the French.

In spite of all the past disasters the Golconda forces, urged by fresh orders from the Court, pushed on more vigorously with the work of erecting entrenchments, and within a surprisingly short time they raised them to the height of the walls of the town. The en-

[1] The figures given by Abbé Carré, 2000 dead and 800 wounded, seem to be exaggerated—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 317.

[2] *Ibid.*

trenchments were so thick and built of such hard materials that the French artillery could produce but little effect on them. The French showed great bravery in daily skirmishes and encounters, and de la Haye often risked his life in perilous ventures.[1] He was an indefatigable man, and even after spending the whole day in encounters outside the town he was active the whole night, making several rounds on the ramparts to keep his men alert and ready at their posts.

At last the Golconda army brought up the entrenchments within the range of a musket shot from the walls of the town, and dragged up and aimed its battery against the Royal Gate. One piece in particular, a 120-pounder, was really terrible and created considerable panic in the town. Fortunately for the French, only stones were used and not real cannon balls. The French noticed that the more the Golconda forces advanced the more did they prepare for a general assault. They were hampered only by the large number of redoubts which the French had set up outside the town and which constantly signalled to the besieged garrison about the disposition and movements of the enemy troops. It was therefore necessary for the Golconda army to destroy these redoubts first before proceeding with its main plan of delivering a general assault on the town. The most advanced of these redoubts was a pagoda,[2] which the French had fortified and where they maintained a small garrison with a few pieces of artillery and some quantities of munitions. In order to find out the strength of the garrison the Golconda generals sent a fisherman, who was admitted into

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 321.

[2] This pagoda was probably the Kapaleswaraswami Temple;—see *Vestiges of Old Madras*, Vol. I, p. 322 (foot-note 1).

the fort by the unsuspecting Frenchmen. As soon as the spy gave his report that there were only fourteen men in the redoubt with quite insufficient munitions, the main body of the Golconda army, numbering 6,000 men, delivered an assault upon the place. For hours the small French garrison resisted valiantly, and there was also opened a deadly fire from the ramparts and bastions of St. Thomé, but the Golconda forces pushed on the attack unmindful of their losses. At last the munitions in the pagoda ran short, but no help could be sent from the town as the rest of the Golconda forces had delivered simultaneous attacks upon it from all sides to prevent any sortie. Gradually the resistance in the pagoda died down ; only two of the defenders could escape and the rest were killed; The pagoda was captured, but the stubborn resistance of the fourteen had inflicted such heavy casualties on the Golconda army that it lost all desire to capture the other redoubts.[1]

As a temporary truce would have been helpful to the Golconda army to push on with its work secretly and unhampered by constant skirmishes with the French, Baba Sahib, one of the three generals, sought to open negotiations. Almost throughout the month of February, 1673, intermittent efforts at negotiations went on without any tangible result. The thing was that de la Haye was quite willing to have a truce provided the *status quo* was maintained and all military actions stopped on both sides. But in spite of the definite assurances of Baba Sahib to that effect, the Golconda army still carried on the work of entrenchments, which naturally roused in the French camp a deep suspicion about his sincerity. It is not unlikely that Baba Sahib

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 323-25.

only wanted to gain time by prolonging the period of negotiations, but Abbé Carré is of opinion that Baba Sahib was honest and sincere and that he was opposed in his plans by the two other generals, who were equal to him in power and who had, as will be seen later, stronger reasons to carry on the war.[1] However, the French were not at all deceived by these sham negotiations, and everyday they made sorties and surprise raids upon their enemies, inflicting heavy casualties on them.

At the Court of Golconda opinion was strongly divided whether to continue the war or to conclude peace with the French on the basis of the cession of St. Thomé. The peace-party represented that the French were an invincible race and that it would be more profitable for the kingdom to allow these people to settle at St. Thomé for trade and commerce. This party was strengthened by the rumour of the arrival of re-inforcements to the French from Europe. At the head of the war-party was the "Nabab, the First Minister of State and Generalissimo,"[2] who had the strongest of reasons for urging a continuance of the war, as St. Thomé was the most profitable part of his own appanage. He represented to the king that the town was already in ruins and that the French would not be able to hold out much longer. In order to convince the king he made use of the letters of the two generals, Mondal Nayak and Trimbak Bussora Raju who were inspired by the same motive of self-interest to wish for a continuance of the war. Mondal Nayak, was the Governor of the province under the Nawab,

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 326-27.

[2] According to Martin, the First Minister of State, Sidi Muzaffar, was friendly towards the French, but the Generalissimo, Sidi Musa Khan, was opposed to them. See *Mémoires*, I, p. 497. Here therefore the Nawab mentioned by Abbé Carré must be taken to mean Sayyad Musa Khan.

while Trimbak Bussora Raju was drawing a huge salary from the state for the period of the war.[1] The war-party finally triumphed, and additional troops were levied and munitions got ready for re-inforcing the besieging army before St. Thomé. But these additional troops and munitions never reached their destination because of a sudden and unexpected threat to Golconda from the Marathas. King Abul Hassan had to pay a large sum of money to buy off Shivaji, which completely dislocated the finances of the kingdom and consequently the military preparations against St. Thomé.[2]

The army before St. Thomé did not know anything about this new development, and confident of getting strong re-inforcements very soon it renewed its attack upon the town with fresh vigour. St. Thomé was furiously shelled, which created a good deal of havoc and destruction, and de la Haye was compelled to undertake a surprise night raid to capture and destroy the Golconda battery. It was an extremely perilous venture, as the battery was enclosed by double entrench-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 327-28.

2 Dr. S. N. Sen—*Foreign Biographies of Shivaji*, p. 255 (translation from Carré's *Suite de l'Histoire de Sevagy*). Carré thinks that Shivaji, who was very friendly towards the French, threatened Golconda with a view to help the besieged garrison at St. Thomé. That is certainly a very wild conjecture. However friendly Shivaji might have been towards the French, he was certainly not so much interested in them as to quarrel with Golconda just for their sake. If his threat to Golconda helped the French during the first siege of St. Thomé, it was only an incidental result. Dr. Sen however points out in his foot-note that Shivaji visited Golconda as a friend and ally. In *Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 332-34 Carré gives out a different story about the cause of the dislocation of the military preparations of Golconda against St. Thomé. He states that there arose a sudden difficulty with the Mughal Empire, which crippled the war efforts of Golconda. The tribute paid to the Mughal Emperor dislocated the finances of the kingdom, and the newly levied troops were diverted to the Mughal frontier to watch the activities of the Imperial Army.

ments and defended by 3,000 men. The plan of the surprise raid was kept absolutely secret, and on the midnight of the 23rd February, 1673, de la Haye, taking with him all his grenadiers, six hundred French and four companies of Indian troops, went out by a secret door and led his party up to the enemy entrenchments without being detected by any of the sentinels. After de la Haye had posted men at all strategic points, the grenadiers climbed up the entrenchments, and with their petards, grenades and fire-balls they created such a havoc on the sleeping heaps of men within that a large number of them were killed on the spot and the rest fled away to the main camp in panic and confusion, leaving their battery in the hands of the French. Almost simultaneously the French opened a deadly fire from all the bastions of the town in order to prevent the enemy cavalry from approaching the attacked entrenchments. Moreover, in the darkness of the night the real strength of the attackers could not be ascertained, and judging from the continuous firings it seemed that the whole garrison had come out. The Golconda forces therefore thought it prudent to remain under cover in their camp some distance away till daybreak, and if the French had the hardihood to advance right up to their camp they would have been able to rout the entire panic-stricken army of Golconda. But de la Haye, a cautious and experienced general, did not want to take any risk and confined his efforts only to the capture and destruction of the enemy battery. As the battery was encircled by ditches and high entrenchments which required long and arduous labour to be destroyed, and as there were no elephants to drag the heavy pieces, the French decided to leave them where they were after having rendered them absolutely harmless. Two of them, in-

cluding the greatest one, a 120-pounder, were burst into pieces and the rest spiked.[1]

For nearly two weeks after this the Golconda forces remained on the defensive and were gradually pushed back from the surrounding plains by the constant sorties and skirmishes of the French. Free communication was re-established between St. Thomé and Madras and the neighbouring villages, and the besieged were able to draw some food-stuffs and other provisions from there. The Golconda generals, left without any re-inforcements of men and money, turned to their allies, the English, and borrowed a considerable sum of money from them. By this means they were able to quieten the dissatisfaction among their troops and to restore some amount of order and discipline. But the only progress they could make was the re-occupation of their entrenchments, where they lay on the defensive, waiting for the arrival of re-inforcements which never came, and constantly harassed by enemy raiding parties.[2]

The final rout of the Golconda forces came about on the 9th March, 1673. The hero of the day was an Indian captain in French service named Manik. Wanting to deliver a crushing blow upon the Golconda army, lodged in the entrenchments, he quietly advanced with his company of Indian troops and thirty French cadets who volunteered to join him. Moving rapidly the party surprised two guard-posts and completely wiped them out. Then it rushed straight at the entrenchments and delivered a furious assault. All the bastions of the town opened fire, which was the first warning that de la Haye got about the raid. When he came up on the ramparts to see what was going on and noticed that the

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 335-37.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 337-38.

Golconda forces were all flying in great panic and disorder, he immediately ordered a general falling in. The Royal Gate, which had remained closed since the day of the capture of the town, was opened in order to give more free passage to the French, who sallied out and attacked with such force and vigour that their enemies were put to a complete rout. The Golconda army suffered very heavy casualties [1] and the losses on the French side also were greater than on previous occasions. At night the French withdrew to St. Thomé, but next morning de la Haye took out a large number of men from the town to pull down and destroy the enemy entrenchments. Observing such a vast number of men advancing from the town, the spies of the Golconda army returned hastily and reported that the French were coming to deliver a general assault on their camp, which threw the already panic-stricken men into the greatest tumult and disorder. They left their camp in haste without even waiting to be attacked, and had the French been fully informed about this panic and disorder they could have easily captured the enemy camp, "where they would have found riches sufficient to compensate them for all the expenses and losses of the war, since it was the custom in oriental countries to carry all precious moveables to the battlefield." But the French concentrated all their efforts on razing to the ground the enemy entrenchments and fortifications in order to prevent the return of the Golconda army within such a narrow distance of the town.[2]

1 Abbé Carré probably gives exaggerated figures, 8,000 killed, wounded and taken prisoner;—see p. 340.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 339-42.

The Golconda forces had become thoroughly dispirited and had no desire to come back. Two of their generals, Trimbak Bussora Raju and Baba Sahib, were mortally wounded in the encounter of the first day, and the third general, Mondal Nayak, was killed in a skirmish on the next day. An embassy from the Golconda camp visited de la Haye with a request to return the dead body of Mondal Nayak, which was done immediately, and the French accorded full military honours to their fallen foe. De la Haye himself went with the procession accompanying the dead body up to the crossing of a river beyond which the enemies had withdrawn. The other two Golconda generals were surprised and sent their thanks to de la Haye for his chivalry and courtesy.[1]

The news of the terrible reverses sustained during these two days created the greatest consternation at the Court of Golconda. The leader of the war-party was thoroughly discredited. He was immediately arrested and thrown into prison.[2] The besieging army which had withdrawn about three leagues from St. Thomé remained quiet in its new camp, entrenched between two hills, and had not the courage to appear on the plains any more.

The siege of St. Thomé was lifted and the French had obtained a smashing victory in the first round. But would it last, and would the French be able to resist the combined strength of the Dutch and Golconda forces?

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1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 345.
2 *Ibid.*

# CHAPTER VIII

## The Masulipatam Enterprise

1. Abandonment of the Masulipatam Settlement. 2. Project of attacking Masulipatam. 3. Departure from St. Thomé. 4. Conduct of the French at Masulipatam. 5. Negotiations with the Governor. 6. Despatch of an Embassy to the Court of Golconda. 7. State of Affairs at the Surat Settlement. 8. State of affairs at St. Thomé. 9. Attitude of the English of Madras. 10. Preparations of the Dutch. 11. Return of de la Haye.

### *1. Abandonment of the Masulipatam Settlement*

We have already seen in a previous Chapter the establishment of a French settlement at Masulipatam in the kingdom of Golconda. That settlement was developing rapidly in wealth and importance under the able direction of its chief, Francois Martin, in spite of many difficulties, particularly lack of finance about which Martin complained bitterly.[1] The appearance of the French naval squadron on the Coromandel coast and the capture of St. Thomé suddenly put a stop to the commercial development of the French settlement at Masulipatam. Early in August, 1672, Martin received letters from Caron and de la Haye informing him about the seizure of St. Thomé and warning him about the possible hostility of the king of Golconda which all Frenchmen at Masulipatam must expect. Accordingly Martin, with his party, left the settlement at once and took

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 295-97.

refuge on board the ship of one of the principal Persian merchants of the town, friendly towards the French.

The English had already withdrawn to Narsapur, a few miles higher up the coast, because of some differences with the Governor of the town; and on the news of the arrival of the French squadron on the Coromandel coast, the Dutch, fearing an immediate attack, were also retiring further inland from the town. When the French also abandoned their settlement, all the local merchants got alarmed and pressed the Governor to make up a compromise with them and call them back. The Governor was quite willing to recall the French, as the sudden withdrawal of all the foreign merchants would result in a complete ruin of the commercial prosperity of the town, and the major part of his revenue was derived from the large number of foreign merchants settled there. The Governor therefore requested Martin to come back to his settlement, giving definite assurances of personal safety to all Frenchmen and the old liberty of trade and commerce in spite of the war at St. Thomé. But in September (1672) Martin received peremptory orders from Caron and de la Haye to come to St. Thomé, and he therefore prepared to leave Masulipatam. About this time a new Governor took charge of the town, and fearing that if the French left Masulipatam, their fleet would be at liberty to cruise along the coast and prey upon all the shipping of that busy port, he tried his best to persuade Martin to change his mind. He represented to Martin that his presence at Masulipatam would be very helpful in bringing about a general compromise between the French and the king of Golconda and that the First Minister of State, Sayyad Muzaffar, was very well disposed towards the French. He also gave a definite guarantee of personal safety to

all Frenchmen at Masulipatam, no matter what happened at St. Thomé, which was further confirmed by a *farman* from the king and a letter from Sayyad Muzaffar handed over to Martin on the 4th October, 1672.[1] All the principal merchants of the town also pleaded with Martin to stay and assured him of their good offices in bringing about a compromise between the French and the king of Golconda. This naturally delayed Martin's departure for sometime, and he wrote both to de la Haye and to the Directors of the Company at Surat about the good offices of the Governor and the principal merchants of Masulipatam and the offer of mediation by Sayyad Muzaffar. But de la Haye did not reply at all, and the Directors accused Martin of deliberate unwillingness to retire to St. Thomé for fear of the privations to be suffered in a besieged town. Moreover, the Governor of Masulipatam had promised Martin another *farman* from the king in ampler terms assuring Frenchmen of perfect liberty throughout the kingdom of Golconda, but later on he demanded 1,000 pagodas for procuring a *farman* of such a wide scope. Thereupon, Martin decided to leave Masulipatam, although in order to indicate that it was not a break with the Golconda authorities he left Malfosse and a clerk in charge of the settlement. The Governor was perfectly satisfied with the statement of Martin that he was not abandoning the settlement but was only going to St. Thomé to render accounts to higher authorities. He assured Martin of the safety of the two Frenchmen left at the settlement and also requested him to inform de la Haye that Sayyad Muzaffar was very well-disposed towards the French and would be glad to offer his help in bringing

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 364.

about a compromise over the question of St. Thomé. Martin finally left Masulipatam on the 10th January, 1673, and arrived at St. Thomé on the morning of the 16th. In his diary he admits that his stay at Masulipatam would have been very helpful in bringing about a compromise between the French and the king of Golconda.[1] His wide experience of Indian affairs, his extreme popularity with the Indian merchants at Masulipatam, and his good relations with the Governor of the town would have been of the greatest value to the French in negotiating with the king of Golconda. But all these advantages were lost through the hasty and inconsiderate decision of de la Haye, Caron and the Directors of the Company at Surat to recall him to St. Thomé.

Malleson has made some erroneous statements about Martin. "In the expeditions undertaken against Ceylon and St. Thomé, a very prominent part had been taken by one Francois Martin." "Little is known of him prior to the year 1672, beyond the fact that he, too, had commenced his career in the service of the Dutch East India Company." "He was regarded, at the time of its being carried out, as the soul of the enterprise undertaken against Point de Galle and Trincomalee."[2] As a matter of fact, Martin was never in the service of the Dutch Company,[3] nor was he with the naval squadron at Trinkomali. He had been living at Masulipatam since the 7th August, 1670 till the 10th January, 1673, when he left that place for St. Thomé. It was at St. Thomé that he met de la Haye and his squadron for the

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 383.

2 Malleson—*History of the French in India*, p. 19.

3 See his life-sketch given by Henri Froidevaux in the introduction to Martin's *Mémoires*. Weber also erroneously states that Martin started his career in the service of the Dutch East India Company.—*La Compagnie Francaise des Indes*, p. 170 (Foot note No. 2).

first time. We have already seen how he was employed by de la Haye to carry on talks with the English Governor of Madras. His services were next utilised in the Masulipatam enterprise as will be described presently.

### 2. *Project of Attacking Masulipatam*

Towards the end of March, 1673, when the Golconda army had raised the siege of St. Thomé and had retired far inland, leaving the French in perfect repose, de la Haye conceived the idea of leading an expedition against Masulipatam, the wealthiest port in the kingdom of Golconda. It is not known definitely whether the plan originated in his own brain or was due to the suggestions of others, but Abbé Carré states that at about this time the head of the French Capuchin mission at Madras, Rev. Father Ephrem, wrote to de la Haye, urging him to lead a naval expedition against Masulipatam, where he would be able to surprise and capture a large number of Muslim ships laden with the richest treasures and merchandise of the East.[1] In any case de la Haye made up his mind to lead an expedition to Masulipatam to destroy the shipping of that port, and also to make a landing and capture the place, if possible, so as to bring effective pressure upon the king of Golconda to conclude peace with the French. He kept his plan secret but started making all necessary preparations for the voyage.

De la Haye was a man of restless spirit and headstrong temperament. Once he had made up his mind about anything, he would not listen to arguments nor brook any opposition. If he had carefully thought about the Masulipatam enterprise and if he had allowed wiser

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 346.

counsels to prevail, he would have certainly realised that his project was, under the circumstances, extremely unwise. Several factors should have been considered before undertaking the enterprise. First, the French had suffered much and had become considerably weakened during the first siege of St. Thomé. After the siege had been lifted, it was time for them to reorganise and strengthen themselves as much as possible without plunging into another aggressive war. Moreover, the disastrous defeat of the Golconda army before St. Thomé and the good offices of the Indian merchants of Masulipatam had already made the king and his ministers inclined for peace. There lay before the French a good opportunity for negotiating, which would be lost completely by embarking on an unprovoked aggression. No doubt the capture of the richly laden vessels at Masulipatam might bring them immense financial gains, but it was certainly more profitable to attempt a peaceful possession of St. Thomé and to maintain friendly relations with the local merchants of Masulipatam. Secondly, unprovoked aggression might have been defended if the French were really strong and if a swift and striking victory had been absolutely certain. Like an experienced strategist de la Haye argued that in order to bring the king of Golconda to reason, it was not sufficient merely to defend St. Thomé but to create a diversion and to carry the war to the enemy's own territory. But de la Haye certainly over-estimated his strength. The prolonged siege of St. Thomé and the bitter struggle with the forces of Golconda had considerably weakened the French in number as well as in munitions and finances. They were no longer equal to fighting simultaneously at two widely separated points. The force which de la Haye required to take with himself

would leave St. Thomé poorly defended against a renewal of the attack by the Golconda army, which was lying only about three leagues away. It was therefore quite likely that the story of Trinkomali would be repeated at St. Thomé. Thirdly, it was widely known that the Dutch, who were at war in Europe against the French and the English, were collecting all their forces in the East in order to attack St. Thomé. They had great influence at the Court of Golconda and were trying their best to persuade the king and his ministers to renew the struggle against the French, holding out promises of an easy victory over them. It was as certain as anything that as soon as the Dutch came to know about de la Haye's departure for Masulipatam they would appear with their whole fleet to blockade St. Thomé by sea, while the Golconda army would return to lay siege to it by land a second time. Was the French squadron still in a position to fight against the Dutch fleet? We have already seen the loss of some of the ships during the first siege of St. Thomé. When de la Haye decided to go to Masulipatam, there remained only four ships out of the once mighty squadron sent by France, *Le Navarre*, *La Sultanne*, *Le Breton* and *Le Flamand*, of which the first two were absolutely out of service. So that de la Haye could take with him only two ships fit for active service, and then there would not be left a single ship at St. Thomé to fight against the Dutch. Moreover, if the Dutch came to blockade St. Thomé by sea with their whole fleet, it would be impossible for de la Haye with two ships only to fight his way back into the roadstead, and he would be completely cut off from St. Thomé. All these considerations should have stopped de la Haye from undertaking the Masulipatam enterprise, but having once made up his mind he would not

listen to any arguments, although Francois Martin, than whom nobody knew things better, pointed out to him all the difficulties and dangers of the plan.[1] De la Haye persisted in his belief that there was no cause to apprehend any danger from the Dutch.

The two ships, *Le Breton* and *Le Flamand*, were made ready for the voyage and were equipped with all necessary things for the expedition. On the 10th April, a council of war was called where the plan against Masulipatam was divulged. De Rebrey, the Governor, was left in sole control after a public proclamation, and was given detailed instructions regarding the conduct of affairs. The garrison left behind consisted of two hundred Frenchmen, some companies of Indian troops and a large number of workers, who had orders to destroy the enemy fortifications and entrenchments and raze them completely to the ground, after which they were to construct three redoubts within half the cannon range from the town on the western side, of which the plans had been drawn up by de la Haye himself.[2]

### 3. *Departure from St. Thomé*

On the 11th April, 1673, de la Haye started from St. Thomé with the two ships, *Le Breton* and *Le Flamand*, and a long boat. He took with him all his guards, the cadets and nearly all the officers numbering about 200 Frenchmen in all, together with three companies of Indian troops.[3] Francois Martin and the two clerks of the Company who had come with him

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 438
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 347.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 348.

from Masulipatam also accompanied the expedition, as de la Haye wanted to make use of them in case of necessity. If he had really taken the advice of Martin, the expedition would have had a different result, but we shall see later how little heed he paid to his suggestions at Masulipatam.

The same obstinacy and refusal to listen to the advice of experienced persons which de la Haye showed in deciding upon the Masulipatam enterprise marked the progress of the voyage from St. Thomé. Speaking about the matter Abbé Carré writes : " It is a surprising thing and something very common among our Frenchmen that as soon as they are on a sea-voyage, they believe themselves to be more knowing and skilful than the most experienced pilots in the world, and wish to follow routes according to their own fancies." [1] Martin also speaks about " the obstinacy of a man (de la Haye) wishing to have his own will against the advice of experienced people." [2] The result was that after four days on the sea the French passed Masulipatam without knowing it, and on the 15th anchored at a place about 36 miles higher up the coast. The return journey to Masulipatam was delayed by unfavourable winds, and it was not till the 18th that the French arrived there. But it was then too late to deal any effective blow upon the shipping of the port. There were several ships in the harbour, just returned from Tennasserim and richly laden with gold, silver and other valuable merchandise, which might have been captured if the French had come straight to Masulipatam from St. Thomé without any delay on the voyage. But the news of the arrival of the French ships higher up the

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 363.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 448.

coast and the depredations on small country boats which they started immediately after spread very quickly to Masulipatam, where all the ships had been almost completely unloaded by the time the French arrived there.

### 4. *Conduct of the French at Masulipatam*

Regarding the conduct of the expedition at Masulipatam, Martin suggested that de la Haye should only capture the Indian shipping in the port, so as to make the merchants bring immediate pressure upon the Court of Golconda to conclude peace with the French, but he was opposed to any pillage or destruction of the ships. Such wanton destruction would needlessly alienate the friendly feelings of these merchants, which were more valuable to the French if they wanted to re-establish their commerce at Masulipatam than the value of all the cargoes that could be seized. But de la Haye, again depending on his own judgment, gave out orders to de Maillé, commanding the company of cadets, to seize all the vessels in the port (except English, Portuguese and those belonging to the king of Siam), and to burn those which could not be towed.[1] Nothing could have been more unwise even for the sake of French interests.

The long boat with 70 Frenchmen on board and two well-armed ships' boats were sent in advance, but no experienced person was sent with the boats, who had an intimate knowledge of these waters and could indicate the safe routes to be followed. The consequence was that a large number of these poor men were lost, as they did not know the condition of the roadstead, the entrance to the river, the currents, reefs and other peri-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. pp. 446-47, 449.

lous places. Proceeding rashly to a place with furious currents from where it could neither advance nor recede, the long boat was finally wrecked on a rock, where some of the men perished and the others saved themselves by swimming ashore. Fortunately for them, these men landed at a place just behind a garden belonging to the settlement of their Company. One of the servants living there recognised them as Frenchmen, and conducted them along the coast at night to the entrance to the river, where they forcibly seized a Persian boat. They then went to the port and easily captured eight merchant vessels lying there without meeting with any resistance, as the ships had been nearly completely unloaded and abandoned at the news of the arrival of the French. In the meantime, de la Haye sent two more of his ships' boats, which met with a better luck because of a favourable tide. The second batch of Frenchmen soon reached the port and boarded the ships lying there on which they met the survivors of the first batch who narrated the disaster which had happened to them.[1] The two parties then set about their business in earnest. As four of the captured vessels were without any sails and riggings and were therefore not in a condition to be carried away, they were set fire to by the French. Of these one belonged to a Persian merchant, Mir Doubashy, who was a great friend of the French. Of the four vessels carried away, the largest belonged to the same Persian merchant, and was the one on board which Martin had retired in the previous year upon the news of the capture of St. Thomé and the war with the king of Golconda.[2]

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 363-64.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 451-52.

It has already been seen that at the time of withdrawing from Masulipatam, Martin had left Malfosse in charge of the settlement together with a clerk of the Company. There they had remained without any warning about the new enterprise of de la Haye. The first time they came to know about it was from the general rumours, from the stories of some of the ship-wrecked Frenchmen who had taken shelter in their settlement and from the fires on the ships in the port. Thinking that it would not be safe for them to stay at Masulipatam any longer, Malfosse and the clerk together with the survivors of the ship-wreck who had taken shelter with them left the settlement and embarked on board the ships captured by the French. Malfosse narrated to de la Haye the terror and panic which had spread throughout the town, from where all the merchants were withdrawing far inland with their goods and riches. The Dutch, who had a very wealthy settlement there, could not remove all their goods in such a short time to their country house and consequently, they fortified themselves in their settlement, where they were determined to hold firm if the French attacked.[1] They were also co-operating with the Governor for the proper defence of the town. Already a large number of troops were pouring into the town which had practically no permanent garrison worth the name.

### 5. *Negotiations with the Governor*

A little after the arrival of Malfosse de la Haye received a letter from the Governor of Masulipatam complaining against the seizure and burning of the

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 365.

ships in the port and reminding him that Masulipatam had been a place of refuge for the French in spite of their war with the king of Goloconda. He finally requested de la Haye to explain what he wanted, so that he might write to the Court about it. Martin was ordered to reply to the Governor's letter to the effect that the French would carry on hostilities till the Golconda forces had definitely retired from before St. Thomé leaving them in peaceful possession of the town. At de la Haye's orders Martin added that if the Governor thought it necessary, he was prepared to land and negotiate with him in person. Malfosse who carried the reply came back on the 22nd and informed de la Haye that the Governor had requested him to send Martin for negotiations.[1]

Accordingly Martin landed on the 27th and was received by the Governor in a public audience, where other officers of the town and the principal merchants were also present. After a heated discussion over the injustices of both sides, the matter was concluded thus, that the French would write to the king of Golconda and to his Chief Minister, Sayyad Muzaffar, about their demands, while the Governor of Masulipatam would also write to the Court on his side, and that there would be a truce for twelve days pending the arrival of replies from the Court. But the despatch of these letters was delayed for three days, because de la Haye was unwilling to give any definite and written orders, so as to be able to put the whole blame on the person negotiating if the negotiations failed, while on the other hand Martin would not move at all unless he had express orders from de la Haye.[2] Finally, however, on the

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 453.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 456.

30th the letters were sent to the Governor to be despatched to the Court. In the letters the French demanded a free possession of St. Thomé, and the Governor enquired how much they were prepared to pay if they wanted to have St. Thomé in the same manner as the English had Madras and the Dutch Pulicat. To this Martin replied that since St. Thomé had been captured by force and was in the possession of the French, the question of payment did not rise at all. Naturally the reply did not please the Governor who nevertheless assured him that he would do his very best to bring about a settlement.[1]

Taking advantage of the twelve days' truce the Governor set about strengthening the defences of the place as much as possible. He got full help and co-operation from the Dutch, who lent him engineers to construct a fort at the mouth of the river where a battery was set up to prevent any landing. Another battery was set up near the port. There arrived nearly 2,000 troops from Golconda, who were further strengthened by a few Dutch contingents. The Dutch also agreed to bear a part of the expenses for the maintenance of the troops.

Although it seemed that the Governor of Masulipatam was in favour of a compromise with the French, there were things which indicated that either on his own or through the influence of the Dutch he was acting in a way which made the position of the French at Masulipatam as difficult as possible. The French settlement in which Martin and Malfosse were lodged was very closely guarded to cut off the retreat of these men to their ships. There was even a plan to attack the settle-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 461-62.

ment at night, which was frustrated only by the timely intervention of some of the friendly Persian merchants.[1] The Governor had also issued strict orders not to allow any Frenchman to land without his permission, and even the letters which Martin wrote to de la Haye were intercepted.[2] Martin threatened twice to leave the place if the Governor did not permit freedom of communication, but in the end he decided to remain, as he knew that if he broke with the Governor he would surely be arrested and would not be allowed to rejoin the French ships. It was virtually a prison for him. A good deal may be said, however, in defence of the Governor. To allow the French to land freely would have been most unwise from the military point of view, as they might have tried to find out the weak spots in the defences of the town, and the interception of Martin's letters was also necessary as he might communicate news about the state of defences and the disposition of troops. Prudence dictated that measures must be taken to prevent the French from taking advantage of the truce for preparing for an attack. The same thing also explains why the Governor refused permission to Martin to supply food-stuffs, fresh water and fuel to the French ships, although the French, with little justice, regarded it as a violation of the truce.[3] Two other things caused a good deal of excitement among the French. One was the murder of a few ship-wrecked Frenchmen at Narsapur at the orders of the Governor of the place, for which, although Martin complained to him, the Governor of Masulipatam was not in any way responsible, as Narsa-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 465. See also Abbé Carré—. *Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 367-68.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 463.
3 *Ibid*, p. 462.

pur was not within his jurisdiction.[1] Another was the arrest and imprisonment of some Frenchmen in the island of Divi.[2] These men had been sent from St. Thomé in a small boat to carry some letters to de la Haye informing him about the arrival of three ships from Surat with Director Baron. They mistook one of the arms of the river Krishna for that of Masulipatam, and probably through stress of weather they were compelled to stop at the Divi island, where they were arrested and thrown into prison and their letters seized. Upon Martin's strong protest, when he came to know about the matter, these letters were handed over to him, who then passed them on to de la Haye. Ultimately the imprisoned Frenchmen were also released and sent back to de la Haye.

At the Court of Golconda the news of the arrival of the French ships at Masulipatam created a good deal of excitement. On the one hand the reports of wanton burning of ships in the port and the solicitations, bribes and boastings of the Dutch that they would soon bring their fleet and drive the French away were strong incentives to a continuance of the war.[3] On the other hand the experience of the tremendous losses suffered during the first siege of St. Thomé and the impending conflict with the Mughal Empire made the Court of Golconda inclined to negotiate with the French. Finally, orders were sent out to the Governor of Masulipatam, giving him full authority to negotiate and conclude a settlement with the French to whom also a Royal *farman* was sent.

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 459-60.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 366.
3 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 467-68.

On the 15th May the Royal *farman* was received and read in a public audience with all the elaborate ceremonies customary on such occasions. In the *farman* the king expressed surprise at the unprovoked hostilities of the French and also complained that the French had sent no embassy to the Court after his accession to the throne, although it was he who had procured a *farman* for them in the previous reign. He concluded by expressing an earnest desire for peace, and declaring that he had given full authority to the Governor of Masulipatam to negotiate a satisfactory settlement. After agreement had been reached on the articles of the treaty and the value of the presents to be made to the Court, he would send out orders to his troops to retire from before St. Thomé; and after the presents had actually reached the Court, he would grant the French a *farman* for the free possession of St. Thomé and its dependencies.[1] Two things are clear from this *farman*, first, that the king regretted very much that the French had not sent any embassy to his Court at all, and second, that they must send considerable presents if they wanted to have a grant of St. Thomé. Ceremonial embassies and rich presents to the king and his chief ministers were the custom in every Eastern Court at that time, and it is really surprising that unlike the English, the Dutch and the Danes, who regularly spent large amounts of money on maintaining friendly relations with the Indian Courts, the French sent neither any embassies nor any presents worth the name.[2] They even failed to realise the bad effects of their policy of indifference.

In view of the condition of the French at St. Thomé and the prospects of their enterprise at Masulipatam,

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 473.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 368.

nothing could have been more favourable and advantageous to them than the *farman* from the king of Golconda. Martin understood it quite well, but as he had no express authority to promise anything, he went to see de la Haye immediately on board his ship. As before, de la Haye gave him full authority to negotiate, but Martin was too cautious to do anything without specific and written orders from him on the two main points, sending of an embassy and making presents. De la Haye gave his consent on the first point but a flat refusal on the second. Martin's earnest exhortation that it was impossible to conclude any treaties with Oriental Princes without rich presents, and that it was to the lasting interest of the French themselves to incur some expenses now, had no effect on de la Haye, who probably thought it beneath his dignity as the Lieutenant-General of "*Le Grand Monarque*" to offer presents to an Indian Ruler. Thus an easy and satisfactory settlement was wrecked almost within sight of port, and the entire blame must fall on de la Haye, who did not pay any heed to the advice of an experienced person like Martin. Rather shrewdly he told Martin that if he regarded presents so necessary he might make them from the Company's account, to which Martin replied that being an ordinary servant of the Company he had no authority to do so on his own.[1] In the final interview with the Governor on the 17th May Martin told him that the French would shortly send an embassy to the Court, but that on no account would they make any considerable presents as asked for. All the friendly local merchants advised Martin to yield a little on this point in the interest of the French themselves, but the

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 475-76.

obstinacy of de la Haye definitely barred the road to any settlement. The Governor of Masulipatam declared that after the French reply it was impossible for him to negotiate, but that they could send an embassy to the Court to carry on negotiations there.[1] The attitude of de la Haye was most unwise and his treatment to Martin deplorable. Being a man with a suspicious mind, he doubted the honesty of Martin and thought that he was really on the side of the Governor of Masulipatam and without any regard for the dignity and interests of the French. The shabby and almost cruel treatment which Martin received from de la Haye after the breakdown of the negotiations resulted in a prolonged illness from which he did not recover till several months later.[2]

### 6. *Despatch of an embassy to the Court of Golconda*

After the breakdown of the talks with the Governor de la Haye decided to send an embassy to the Court of Golconda. He first asked Martin to go, but the latter definitely refused to go unless he was provided with the means to bring about a satisfactory settlement, namely, presents for the king and the Chief Minister, Sayyad Muzaffar. Hot words passed between the two, but as Martin stood firm on his refusal de la Haye chose another person, de Chateaupers, for the embassy. De Chateaupers showed great eagerness for the post, and he was so optimistic that he represented to de la Haye that it would be quite easy and simple to bring about a satisfactory settlement.

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 477.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 480.

On the 26th May (1673) de Chateaupers started from Masulipatam. The embassy was of the poorest quality possible. Neither de Chateaupers nor the interpreter he was given was familiar with the formalities and conventions of an Eastern Court. The ambassador was not provided with any retinue or equipage and was given only a very small amount of money for the expenses of the journey. For all the presents to the king, the ambassador was given only a gun and a pair of French pistols, and he was to make the king understand, while presenting these things, that a soldier like de la Haye had no better presents to offer. He also carried two letters of civility, one for the king and another for Sayyad Muzaffar. In vain did Martin warn de la Haye even at the last moment that a gun, a pair of French pistols and two ordinary letters of civility were not sufficient to procure a grant of St. Thomé and its dependencies, among which the French included many villages which never belonged to St. Thomé. But de la Haye was too obstinate to listen to any arguments.[1]

Immediately after de Chateaupers left Masulipatam, de la Haye also prepared to return to St. Thomé. But before we follow the return voyage let us see the result of the embassy. De Chateaupers, who had started on his journey with high hopes, was soon disillusioned after his arrival at the capital. In July he wrote to de la Haye from Golconda that he could achieve nothing at the Court because of the bribes and promises of help of the Dutch and the hopelessly insignificant presents sent by the French. He concluded his letter by stating that there was absolutely no prospect of success unless the French were prepared to

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 482.

offer very considerable presents.[1] It was simple folly not to have realised this palpable fact at the very beginning. The embassy produced little, and in the same month de Chateaupers returned to St. Thomé *via* Masulipatam.

### 7. *State of affairs at the Surat Settlement*

Soon after the capture of St. Thomé, de la Haye had written to the Directors at Surat, Baron and Gueston, representing to them the importance of the place and the advantages which the Company might derive from its possession, and requesting them to send immediately all the help possible in men, money, munitions, food-stuffs and ships. He also requested Baron to come to St. Thomé to devise together the best means of preserving the place for the French. In spite of the chronic quarrels and bickerings between the two Directors, as we have seen already in Chapter III, the matter was of such a pressing importance that both of them agreed that every possible help must be sent to St. Thomé at once, and that Baron should go there in person as desired by de la Haye. But unfortunately, Gueston changed his mind soon after. About this time the merchant in charge of the Company's settlement in Persia, de Lestoile, came back to Surat and informed the Directors that the king and the ministers of Persia were indignant at the French not having sent any embassy to the Court, although their Company had been granted very advantageous *farmans* and had been carrying on a lucrative trade in Persia for the last five years.[2] It was therefore absolutely necessary to send an

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. p. 497.
2 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 349.

ambassador to Ispahan immediately, and Gueston wanted to go there himself. This led to a very difficult situation, for if Baron went to St. Thomé and Gueston to Persia, the Chief Settlement at Surat would be left without any Director. Each of them wanted to go, leaving the other at Surat, and finally, as neither would yield, it was decided that both should go, leaving the Chief Settlement under the charge of two merchants. The evil consequence of leaving the settlement without any Director was that the Mughal authorities at Surat began to treat the French just as they liked, curbed many of their old rights and privileges and even forbade them to hoist their national flag over their settlement, a right which every other European nation exercised.[1]

Baron was the first to start from Surat towards the end of February, 1673. Although Gueston could not prevent his departure, he put every difficulty in his way in taking sufficient help to St. Thomé. He particularly refused to give more than a very paltry sum of money, which the French at St. Thomé needed more than anything else and which there was in sufficient quantity at Surat, on the old plea that he had express orders from the *Chambre Générale* not to furnish anything to the Royal Squadron. It has already been seen that there is no evidence of any such orders having been given by the *Chambre Générale*. Ultimately, Baron took with him the king's ship *Le St. Joan de Bayonne*, and two other boats, with some munitions, food-stuffs, a few men and even less money. Thus even in his direst needs at St. Thomé, de la Haye could not get sufficient help and re-inforcement from Surat only because of the quarrels and bickerings between the two

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 351.

Directors. Before following the adventurous voyage of Baron, let us turn for a little while to see the result of the embassy sent to Persia and of another projected embassy to the Court of the Great Mughal.

Gueston had decided to go to Persia without considering all the hardships and perils of the journey, particularly for a man of feeble health like him. From Ormuz to Ispahan it was very rough and mountainous, and the terrible heat of the country in the summer was almost unbearable for Europeans. Soon after Baron's departure, Gueston also left Surat at the beginning of March (1673) and arrived safely at Ormuz from where he took the road to Ispahan. But he could proceed only up to Shiraz, where he fell ill and died.[1]

The French Company had been contemplating for a long time to send an embassy to the Court of the Great Mughal at Agra, and it was decided to send for this purpose de l'Espinay, who was next in rank to the Directors. After the departure of Baron and Gueston from Surat, de l'Espinay set about preparing for the embassy to Agra. But at the last moment things were upset by the refusal of the Governor of Surat to grant him the necessary passport unless he was satisfied with the value of the presents to be made.[2] Martin suspects that the refusal of the Governor was due to the wirepullings of the Banian agent, Samson. Gueston had wanted to go to Agra himself after his return from Persia, and he might have instructed Samson to create all sorts of difficulties for de l'Espinay in order to gain time.[3] It cannot be definitely ascertained whether it

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 350.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 350-51. This de l'Espinay was not the same person as the founder of Pondicherry.

3 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 450.

was true or not, but in view of Gueston's extreme love of power and fame, such a thing was not unlikely. However, de l'Espinay did not survive this disappointment long and died of apoplexy soon after.

Baron's voyage to St. Thomé was of the most adventurous nature. The Dutch, who came to know that three French ships were being equipped at Surat to carry help to St. Thomé, sent a strong fleet immediately to the Malabar coast to intercept them. The French met the Dutch fleet a number of times, and had it come to real fighting, they could have offered only a very feeble resistance. But every time they were fortunate enough to be able to escape into a friendly port. They first took shelter at Bombay and then at Goa. The President of the English settlement at Bombay, Angiers, was a great friend of the French, and he even released some of the French deserters in the English service to rejoin the service of their own nation. The Portuguese Viceroy of Goa also showed every mark of courtesy and politeness to Baron. From Goa the French ships went to Tranquebar, and after stopping at Porto Novo and Pondicherry on the way they finally arrived before St. Thomé on the 4th May, 1673.[1]

## 8. *State of affairs at St. Thomé*

Two days after the departure of de la Haye from St. Thomé, Abbé Carré [2] arrived there with some despatches

1 AbbéCarré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 356-57. The story was related to Abbé Carré by Baron himself. See also Martin's *Mémoires*, I, p. 480.

2 Abbé Carré started from France in March, 1672, and following the overland route he reached India in October. He had visited India once before as a private traveller and wrote a detailed account of his travels, *Voyages des Indes Orientales*. On the second occasion, although he did not

from the King and from the *Chambre Générale* in Paris. He was very well received and lodged in the house of the Governor, de Rebrey. A few days later he sent a messenger by land to Masulipatam to inform de la Haye about his arrival and about the state of affairs at St. Thomé. In company with de Rebrey he went out to see the destruction of the enemy fortifications and entrenchments, which he found to have been constructed on the most solid and skilful lines. The entrenchments were so huge as could easily keep seven to eight thousand horses under cover from the artillery of the town within half a musket-range from the place. There were wide streets and big houses to accommodate 1,00,000 men.[1]

News arrived at St. Thomé about the state of affairs in Golconda and the disposition of the Dutch at Batavia. Letters from Golconda gave the information that the new troops levied for the siege of St. Thomé had been diverted to quell the rebellion of one of the nobles of the country. From Batavia came the warning that the Dutch were collecting all their naval forces in the East to come and blockade St. Thomé by sea, while at the same time they were trying to persuade the Golconda army to come back and lay siege to the place by land. De Rebrey immediately sent a messenger to Masulipatam to warn de la Haye, and he also

have any direct connection with the French Company, he was given an official status by the French Government and was entrusted by the Company to see the state of affairs in the French settlements in India. Abbé Carré wrote a detailed account of his second visit to India, *Le Courier de l'Orient*, which has not yet been published. The manuscript is preserved in the India Office Library, London.

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 351. Probably there is some exaggeration in the statement, intended to stress the odds against which the French had to fight and to give them greater credit for what they had achieved.

took all necessary steps to put the defences of the place in a proper condition, as much as the extremely limited resources at his command would permit. All the bastions on the side of the sea were refitted with better artillery from the two remaining ships in the roadstead, *Le Navarre* and *La Sultanne*, which were disarmed preparatory to being beached.[1]

The English of Madras, very much disappointed at the withdrawal of the Golconda army from before St. Thomé, told the Golconda generals that de la Haye had taken away with him the major part of his forces, leaving only a very small garrison at St. Thomé. This induced them to send a strong force of about 2,000 men to the outskirts of the town, but they were completely surprised and disillusioned by the terrific resistance of the French.[2] They again lay quiet in their camp till the 4th May (1673), when the sight of three ships approaching St. Thomé raised hopes in their hearts that the Dutch were coming with their promised fleet. Considerable bodies of Golconda troops made a rush for the sea-beach, but the artillery from the bastions of the town and even more the discovery that the ships were French turned them away in despair.[3] It was the arrival of Baron with help from Surat.

De Rebrey went out to welcome Baron on board his ship and handed over to him the instructions left by de la Haye, which asked him not to land or unload anything from the ships till his return from Masulipatam, except only the food-stuffs and munitions procured at Pondicherry. Baron obeyed the instructions to the

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 352.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 353-54.
3 *Ibid.*, pp. 355-56.

letter, refusing either to land or to allow anything to be unloaded from his ships. Martin suggests that the only possible reason for the rather queer instructions was that de la Haye was hoping at the time to be able to make peace with the enemy at Masulipatam, and was thus unwilling to give any excuse to the Company that it had contributed anything to the capture or preservation of St. Thomé.[1] It is true that de la Haye never did proper justice to the servants of the Company in spite of all the services they rendered, but we must also remember that he had not been fairly treated at Surat, nor did he get that support and help from the Company which he might have reasonably expected. The bitterness of his feelings against the Company and its servants, about which Martin complains so much, is not therefore wholly inexcusable. On the 5th (May 1673) a small boat was sent by sea and a messenger by land to Masulipatam to inform de la Haye about the arrival of Baron, and we have seen already the fate of the boat and its men in the island of Divi.

### 9. *Attitude of the English of Madras*

The attitude of the English of Madras towards the French was still one of jealousy and dislike. During the first siege of St. Thomé they had stopped all communication between Madras and that town, in which they had been helped considerably by the strict watch set up by the Golconda forces. But when the siege was lifted, the road between the two towns lay clear, and the French often went to Madras to buy provisions or to seek some amusement and diversion there after the

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 483.

hard days they had gone through. The English were not opposed to these visits at first, because they could sell their goods to the French at double the ordinary prices and could therefore make huge profits; and secondly, by taking advantage of their extreme love of pleasure and debauchery, they could induce a large number of the French to desert. But later, under the pressure of the Golconda generals, the English began to put every possible difficulty in the way of the French either visiting Madras or buying any provisions there, particularly after the visit of Baba Sahib to Madras on the 18th May (1673).[1]

Abbé Carré after a short stay at St. Thomé took up his residence at Madras, apparently for the object of recouping his health after the serious illness from which he had suffered in Bijapur.[2] But his real intention was to be of some service to his nation. He made use of his stay at Madras to represent the views of the French to the English Governor, to procure provisions, and to detect deserters and send them back to St. Thomé. A man of the position of Abbé Carré could not but be very well received by the English Governor, and even he had the greatest difficulty in persuading the Governor to change his policy towards the French. Oftentimes there were heated arguments on both sides, but the situation was always eased by the tact and mildness of Abbé Carré, who realised that it was absolutely necessary for the French to be on the best of terms possible with the English.

Soon after his arrival at St. Thomé, Abbé Carré pointed out to the French authorities the evil conse-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 359-60.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

quences of their unwise policy of living from hand to mouth. The existing stocks of provisions in the town could last for fifteen days only, but since the road to Madras was free and open, nobody cared to lay in more stocks. Already there were strong rumours about the coming of the Dutch fleet to blockade St. Thomé and in order to provide for that emergency Abbé Carré suggested the purchase of huge quantities of wheat and rice, which he could then get at a cheap price from some of the merchants of Madras. But de Rebrey replied that he was unable to do anything without the express orders of de la Haye.[1] Thus a good opportunity was thrown away, for which the French had to suffer a great deal during the second siege of St. Thomé. When St. Thomé was very hard pressed after the arrival of the Dutch fleet and the return of the Golconda army, the Governor of Madras made a proclamation prohibiting the inhabitants of that town from furnishing anything to the French, and in order to see that the prohibition was srictly enforced he posted guards on the road to St. Thomé. Even then Abbé Carré could evade the restriction by influencing the captains of these guards. When that was detected and the English Governor complained to him about the way he was making use of his stay at Madras, Abbé Carré left his lodging in the town and went to live in the suburbs, where his house was situated on the road along which all food-stuffs, brought from the neighbouring villages and intended for Madras, must pass.[2] The English Governor did not object to his sending provisions by this country route, which was not so open as the coastal route.

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 360.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 392.

In spite of all their supplications and persuasive arguments the French could not bring the English into a closer union against their common enemy, the Dutch, even after the arrival of the Dutch fleet, which, it was believed, was intended as much against Madras as against St. Thomé. The main argument of the French was that as they and the English were allies in Europe fighting jointly against the Dutch, it was only reasonable for them to be allies in India also against their common enemy. To this the English replied that they could not ally themselves openly with the French of St. Thomé for fear of incurring the displeasure of the king of Golconda, particularly in view of the weak defences of Madras, and secondly that they, being servants of a commercial company, had no business to enter into any offensive or defensive military alliance, except upon the express orders of their superior authorities. Towards the end of June Baron once wrote to the English Governor offering to send 5,00 Frenchmen and as many Indian troops in case the Dutch attacked Madras, which was strongly apprehended at the time. But the English Governor laughed at the offer and replied that the French were in greater need of help and assistance than the English. At that time the English forces in Madras consisted of only 40 Europeans and about 200 Indian troops.[1] Far from joining the French into a closer union against the common enemy, the English were compelled to help the Dutch under pressure from the Golconda generals. On the 22nd June (1673), Baba Sahib wrote to the Governor of Madras that the English should give proof of their friendship and alliance

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 391. For the weak state of the defences of Madras see *Records of Fort St. George : Diary and Consultation Book* (1672-78), p. 19. (Consultation, 2nd February, 1674).

with Golconda by supplying food-stuffs and other provisions to the Dutch ships, which were lying in the roadstead of Madras at the time. Afraid of breaking with Golconda, the Governor replied that the English, being at war with the Dutch, could not give them any help directly, but that they would not object to country boats carrying supplies to the Dutch ships.[1] It is true that the English had a reasonable ground of apprehension from the Golconda army, but their timid submissiveness only increased the demands of the Golconda generals.

### *10. Preparations of the Dutch*

It has already been seen that the Dutch were collecting all their naval forces in the East and making preparations for coming to blockade St. Thomé. They were the most implacable enemies of the French and wanted to ruin them everywhere they could. St. Thomé was particularly a sore point with them, as they had wanted the place themselves and had been disappointed.[2] Through the large number of spies they had in Madras and from the French deserters themselves they knew all about the condition of St. Thomé during the absence of de la Haye. The news that the French

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 389.

2 There is a gross mistake in *Danvers' Dutch Activities in the East*, edited by Dr. Niharranjan Ray. In p. 41 it is stated that in 1669 the Dutch drove the Portuguese out and took possession of St. Thomé themselves. This goes against all known facts. St. Thomé was taken from the Portuguese in 1662 by Golconda forces, and it remained under Golconda rule till its capture by the French in 1672. Before the French capture of St. Thomé the Dutch tried to negotiate with the Court of Golconda for the cession of the place to them, but the latter refused to listen to any such proposal.

had practically no ships, only a very small garrison and depleted stocks of munitions and provisions encouraged the Dutch to avail themselves of the opportunity and to make an attempt to seize the place. Victory seemed to them to be absolutely certain, as de la Haye had with him only two ships, and if St. Thomé could be blockaded effectively it would not only prevent his re-entry into the place, but would also make the capture of the French General an easy affair. So sure were they of success that even before starting for St. Thomé they spread the rumour that they had already captured de la Haye and would soon bring him a prisoner to Batavia.

But the capture of St. Thomé, as fortified by the French, presented a difficult military problem. It was not at all an easy affair to take the place by frontal assaults. A better course was to blockade it completely, to cut off all the supply routes both by land and sea, and thus to starve out the garrison, particularly when it was well known that the French did not have sufficient stocks of munitions and provisions to stand a prolonged siege. But for that it was necessary to have the full co-operation of the Golconda army, as the Dutch did not have sufficient land forces. The first thing necessary, therefore, was to persuade the king of Golconda to renew the struggle against the French and to order his army to lay a second siege to St. Thomé. The Dutch had at that time a tremendous influence at the Court of Golconda, and their agent, who had by his tact, vain promises and enormously rich presents won over the chief ministers, obtained a complete diplomatic success. The king was in favour of ending the hostilities with the French, from which he had only suffered heavy losses. But the Dutch agent made very

lucrative offers and represented vigorously that the French were already at the end of their resources, and just a little more push was required to dislodge them from the place which they had unjustly usurped. After long wavering the king ultimately yielded to the persuasions of the Dutch agent and concluded an agreement that the Golconda army would co-operate with the Dutch fleet on condition that the Dutch, after taking the place, would give it back to him, and would receive as their reward all the French artillery at St. Thomé and an exemption for ten years from all sorts of duties for their commerce throughout the kingdom.[1]

Thus assured of the co-operation of the Golconda army, the Dutch set about completing their naval preparations, and on the 16th June, 1673, six of their ships were sighted off St. Thomé.[2] They were seen coming at full speed towards the roadstead, where there were only four French ships including the three recently arrived from Surat. Of the two ships left by de la Haye at St. Thomé, *La Sultanne* had already been dismantled and beached after all her riggings and munitions had been removed, and at the sight of the Dutch fleet the other ship, *Le Navarre*, also was hastily beached without unloading the guns and munitions on board.[3]

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 361-62. See also *Vestiges of Old Madras*, Vol I, p. 334. According to Martin it was after the fall of St. Thomé that a Treaty was concluded between the Dutch and the King of Golconda about sharing the spoils of victory. Guns, munitions and other things of military use to be found in the town were to be shared equally between the two Allies, and the town was to be handed over to the King of Golconda. But although a definite treaty might have been concluded after the fall of St. Thomé, there must have been some previous agreement between the two Allies before the Dutch began their operations against St. Thomé.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 370.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 374.

The three French ships lying in the roadstead came nearer the shore to be under the protection of the artillery on the bastions, and the whole sea-beach was crowded with thousands of men, who ran to see the much vaunted Dutch fleet. The action was started by the Dutch at about 10 o'clock in the morning with a salvo of artillery from their ships, which was quickly replied to from the French bastions. The Dutch Vice-Admiral's ship was carried away to the open sea. The artillery duel went on for full three hours, and it was decidedly unfavourable for the Dutch, who at last withdrew to Madras for a time, but came back shortly after. They were again very hotly received, and after two hours' combat they withdrew for the second time. Soon after another Dutch squadron of eight big ships was sighted coming towards the roadstead of St. Thomé, but it prudently cast anchor beyond the range of the French guns.[1]

On the next day, Rijcklof, the Commander of the Dutch fleet, sent some officers to the camp of the Golconda generals to complain that they had made no move at all while the Dutch fleet was in action against St. Thomé. But Baba Sahib replied that he had received letters from Masulipatam not to do anything against the French pending fresh orders from the Court, where the French had sent an embassy to negotiate a settlement.[2]

Baron, who since his arrival at St. Thomé had not set foot on land nor allowed anything to be unloaded from his ships, was on board his ship during the fight with the Dutch, and had shown great courage and dar-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 371-72.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 373.

ing. However, realising that in the next attack the Dutch would concentrate their fire on his ships, Baron at last landed and ordered the ships to be unloaded as quickly as possible.

Disappointed at the reply of Baba Sahib and realising the impossibility of taking St. Thomé without the co-operation of a land army, Rijcklof tried to make the best of a bad situation. He divided his fleet into three squadrons, which he posted at the approaches to the roadstead to prevent the entry of any boat carrying food-stuffs and munitions to the French and also to capture de la Haye as he attempted to re-enter St. Thomé. At the same time he informed the Court of Golconda about the arrival of the Dutch fleet before St. Thomé and repeated the old promises of an easy victory over the French. This ultimately decided the king and his ministers, still vacillating even after the conclusion of an agreement, to join whole-heartedly with the Dutch in a final struggle against the French, who were believed to be almost at the end of their resources.[1] The Golconda army also, seeing that the Dutch fleet continued to stay in the roadstead of St. Thomé and hoping shortly to receive orders from the Court to renew the struggle against the French, started to be on the move again, and posted guards on all the roads to St. Thomé to surprise the convoys of food-stuffs for the French.

### 11. *Return of de la Haye*

After the despatch of an embassy to the Court of Golconda de la Haye decided to return to St. Thomé, having nothing more to do at Masulipatam. He had lost a large part of his men in ship-wreck and capture,

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 378.

and food-stuffs and other provisions had also run short. He had not received much news from St. Thomé, and had no knowledge of the arrival of the Dutch fleet. On the 31st May (1673) he sailed from Masulipatam with his two ships, *Le Breton* and *Le Flamand* and the four captured ships on which he put French officers and sailors. The return voyage was a most unhappy one, and shortly after reaching the high seas the four captured ships broke away under the stress of storm and wind and made for the coast where they were re-captured by the Golconda authorities together with the Frenchmen who were on board.[1] A little after, the ship *Le Flamand* also broke away and went to Balasore on the coast of the Bay of Bengal, where she was captured sometime later by the Dutch.[2] De la Haye himself was on board *Le Breton*, which was more strongly built and better-sailed than the others and could fight against the furious gale. On the 20th June, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the ship appeared within sight of St. Thomé.[3]

De la Haye noticed from a distance that the Dutch fleet was lying in wait for him. He had only one ship as against fourteen of the enemy, but his courage did not fail him. In the face of the evident danger, he showed a dashing and reckless bravery in keeping with the best traditions of French arms. He stood calm and gave orders to his men not to try to change the ship's course, but to make straight for St. Thomé. The wind was favourable for the French ship, and there was just a chance of being able to evade the Dutch fleet and to re-enter the roadstead of St. Thomé.

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 500.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 539.
3 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 383.

The Dutch Admiral, as soon as he saw the French ship approaching, sent six of his ships to intercept her, to capture her if possible, or else to sink her. The rest of the fleet lay anchored as it was, as the Dutch were confident of an easy success, having a superiority of six to one. Two of the Dutch ships fired from a distance to which the French did not reply but continued their dash for the coast. It was taken by both the Dutch and the observers who had crowded the beach in thousands to indicate a shortage of munitions on the French ship. But the French were only biding their time, and when the two Dutch ships had come sufficiently closer, they delivered such furious broadsides that the Duch ships heeled and were on the point of sinking. The four other Dutch ships, which had come upon the scene by this time, got the same hot reception. Two of them were completely dismasted and drifted away to the sea, while the two others, in order to escape being grappled and boarded by the French, gave an open passage to their ship, which still continued her dash for the coast. The Dutch Admiral, surprised at the rout of his six ships, signalled to the rest of his fleet to raise anchor and engage the French vesssel. Just at that moment a little rain and a strong gust of wind blew away the sail of the French ship, and by the time another one was put up the wind had shifted to the opposite direction making it impossible for the French ship to reach St. Thomé. There was no other alternative for de la Haye but to put out to the open sea again, where he was pursued to some distance by the Dutch fleet. But he was able to escape, when as the evening darkness fell, the Dutch Admiral recalled his ships, which came back and lay anchored at scattered positions, some on the side of Madras and some be-

fore St. Thomé, while two of them, reeling under the shock of the French broadsides, withdrew into the river of Pulicat for repairs.[1]

That was the end of the heroic fight of one French ship against the whole fleet of the Dutch. Abbé Carré has gone into raptures in his description of the action, but leaving aside his sentimental effusions, it must be admitted that the French acquited themselves wonderfully well. What is really surprising is that knowing their overwhelming numerical superiority and the tremendous advantage to be gained from the capture of de la Haye, who certainly could not have resisted very long with his single ship, the Dutch did not pursue him very far when he put out to the open sea. One probable explanation is that the Dutch, who knew about the arrival of a strong English fleet in Indian waters about this time, feared that if they went far in pursuit of the French vessel and thus got scattered, they might be surprised and caught at a disadvantage by the English, with whom also they were at war. It was this fear which made the Dutch Admiral recall his ships, thus giving de la Haye an opportunity to escape.

After escaping from the Dutch fleet, de la Haye proceeded southwards with the intention of going to

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 385-86. He had watched the naval fight from the terrace of the Fort St. George at Madras with the Governor and other principal officers and citizens of the town. Martin does not give much details although he was on board *Le Breton* at the time. It was possibly this combat referred to in the *Records of Fort St. George: Diary and Consultation Book* (1672-78), pp. 14-15—Consultation, 7th July, 1673. "The (Dutch) Rear-Admiral and another ship had received so much damage from the French that the former hath all her guns taken out and is now ready to be carried out to the sea to be sunk; the other patched up for the present . . . . ". It also might have referred to the earlier Combat of 16th June (see p. 239).

Porto Novo, where he could procure food-stuffs and munitions, but the wind being unfavourable he was compelled to anchor before Pondicherry. On the way the French met the English fleet, which was proceeding straight to Masulipatam instead of to Madras upon the warning that the whole of the Dutch fleet was lying in wait at Madras. As a matter of fact, although the English knew that the Dutch had come in order to blockade St. Thomé, they were not wholly free from the fear of an attack on their own town. The continued presence of the Dutch fleet before St. Thomé and its occasional stay in the roadstead of Madras created a considerable amount of panic among the English till the 27th June, when upon news from Pulicat that de la Haye had gone to Pondicherry, the Dutch fleet sailed away to get him there.[1]

De la Haye reached Pondicherry on the 30th June and set about procuring food-stuffs and munitions. On the next day, the 1st July, a fleet of about ten vessels was sighted from a distance, and taking it to be the Dutch fleet, de la Haye immediately left the place in order to get away before the Dutch had closed in upon him. Here Abbé Carré and Martin give conflicting accounts and it is difficult to determine who is right, as Abbé Carré got the details from de la Haye himself after his return to St. Thomé, and Martin was on board the ship *Le Breton* and cannot therefore be disbelieved. According to Abbé Carré the Dutch fleet had already anchored before Pondicherry before de la Haye could get away. But taking advantage of the darkness of the night and a very favourable wind, de

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 391.

la Haye passed through the middle of the Dutch fleet and escaped to the open sea.[1] On the other hand, Martin states that the French were able to leave Pondicherry in time, and instead of proceeding along the coast their ship went far out to the open sea in order to avoid meeting with the Duch fleet which lay anchored before Sadraspatam.[2] On the 4th July, the French ship was sighted to the north of Madras, and on the 5th she re-entered the roadstead of St. Thomé.

That was the end of the Masulipatam enterprise, but what was the result? The enterprise had been taken in hand with two objects, first to capture the richly laden merchant vessels at Masulipatam and second, to put pressure upon the king of Golconda to conclude peace by the cession of St. Thomé; and it must be admitted that the enterprise had failed disastrously in both the objects. Not only was nothing gained but de la Haye had suffered the loss of one ship, *Le Flamand*, and most of the men he had taken out with him. The enterprise might have been successful if de la Haye had consented to spend some money as presents to the king and the chief ministers of Golconda, but his obstinate refusal ruined all prospects of a compromise. It was sheer luck that he could escape being captured by the Dutch fleet and could come back to St. Thomé. But even though he had been able to return, the prospects before him and the small garrison left in the town were anything but hopeful. The king of Golconda had refused to conclude peace with the French, and had obtained the full co-operation of the Dutch. The French

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 393.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. p. 490.

must now fight singlehanded against tremendous odds. The prospects of victory had definitely receded, and premonitions of defeat became stronger and stronger as days and months wore on.

# CHAPTER IX

## War with the Dutch and the second siege of St. Thome

1. Condition of St. Thomé. 2. Abbé Carré at Madras. 3. Failure of negotiations and burning of the Golconda camp. 4. Return of the Dutch fleet. 5. Laying of a second siege by the combined Dutch and Golconda forces. 6. Military operations.

### *1. Condition of St. Thomé*

The return of de la Haye put fresh hopes and courage into the hearts of the French at St. Thomé. They had now to prepare for another struggle not only with their old enemy, but also with the Dutch who were believed to be coming back shortly with their whole fleet to blockade St. Thomé by sea at the same time as the Golconda forces came back and laid siege by land. Even though an ambassador had been sent to the Court of Golconda and negotiations were still going on, de la Haye must have realised that peace was not to be obtained so easily, particularly after the Dutch had joined openly. There was, however, just a chance that the Golconda forces, who had remained encamped at some distance from the town, might be terrorised to break up their camp and retire further inland before they could be joined by their allies. With that object in view, on the 6th July de la Haye sent two Indian officers to their camp with a warning that unless they left the plains free immediately, he was going to pay them a visit which would cost them dear. The envoys were received with all possible courtesy by Baba Sahib, who sent them back with a polite re-

ply that he was only waiting for the latest orders from the Court to break up the camp and withdraw finally.[1] Although it produced no immediate result, as the Golconda forces did not leave the plains free at all, it served as a warning that de la Haye had come back to St. Thomé and was ready to take the field again.

On the 13th July de la Haye held a grand review of all the forces in the town, in which there appeared twelve hundred men including sailors and Indian troops.[2] There were four serviceable ships in the roadstead, *Le Breton* and the three ships brought by Baron from Surat. The bastions and fortifications were well protected, and the French could look forward with confidence to be able to repel all enemy attacks. But they were not strong enough to sustain a prolonged siege, as they lacked in provisions, munitions and finances. It therefore became their constant effort to keep the communication with Madras open and to try to get supplies from there as much as possible. Good relations with the English became much more important now than during the first siege, as being blockaded by sea after the return of the Dutch fleet the French could not send anywhere else for supplies and reinforcements.

## 2. *Abbé Carré at Madras*

We have already seen how Abbé Carré was trying his best to send supplies from Madras, where he had taken up his residence, and even after the closing of the shorter coastal route the English Governor left

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 395.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 400.

Abbé Carré free to send whatever he liked by a longer and circuitous country road which would not be noticed by the Golconda forces. After de la Haye returned, he realised the value and importance of keeping a permanent agent at Madras, and he asked Abbé Carré to make even redoubled efforts to send supplies from there. He instructed Abbé Carré to be on the best of terms with the English Governor in spite of all humiliations and rebuffs.[1] The French at St. Thomé were now more than ever dependent on supplies from Madras and therefore on the goodwill of the English, and they were not in a position to insist too much on prestige or point of honour.

De la Haye was in regular, almost daily, correspondence with Abbé Carré, who also frequently came from Madras to see him for consultation. On the 7th July he came to St. Thomé to receive instructions regarding his duties at Madras, when he was entrusted with a letter for the English Governor. In the letter de la Haye, after reminding the Governor of Madras about the close alliance which existed in Europe between England and France, represented to him the necessity and advantage of being united in the East also against the common enemy, the Dutch. But the English Governor excused himself on the plea that his position as the servant of a commercial Company was entirely different from that of de la Haye, who was the servant of the king of France, and that in the interest of the trade and commerce of his Company it was not possible for him to join with the French for fear of incurring the displeasure of the king of Golconda.[2] But

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 395.
2 *Ibid.*

de la Haye still persisted in maintaining friendly relations with the English, and about three days later he again wrote to the Governor of Madras asking for some news about the English fleet and the state of affairs in Europe, to which Langhorn replied that he had absolutely no news to give. De la Haye complained against this discourteous behaviour, but had to remain content with a proud reply.[1]

The English Governor complained a number of times about the presence of French soldiers in Madras, who went there for diversions or for the purchase of provisions. Their presence irritated the Golconda generals, and their frequent disorderly conduct created a good deal of trouble in the town. On the 15th July, therefore, de la Haye made a proclamation at St. Thomé prohibiting anybody from going to Madras under penalty of death unless with a written permit from himself.[2] The proclamation was made not merely to please the English Governor but to save the position of the French themselves. Many of the French soldiers who visited Madras, after spending their all, fell into the traps of the English, Dutch, Portuguese and Indian agents, and deserted from the service of their nation. The practice was growing into dangerous proportions and the proclamation was intended to put a stop to it.

Upon the news that General Baba Sahib was gradually withdrawing his forces to the fortress of Poonamalee, the Governor of Madras wrote a letter of compliments to de la Haye on the 23rd, expressing great satisfaction at the success of the French arms.[3]

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 398-99.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 401.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 403.

But in fact, it was suspected that the English Governor himself had written to the Court of Golconda to prevent the rest of the army from leaving the camp and retiring to Poonamalee on the ground that it would leave the whole countryside at the mercy of the French.[1] It cannot be definitely ascertained whether it was true or not, but it does not seem unlikely, considering the attitude of the English Governor, which was not only not pro-French but definitely anti-French.

This general feeling of jealousy and antagonism became much more intensified at the news that the French had seized about two thousand sheep grazing on the plains before St. Thomé (30th July). These sheep belonged to some citizens of Madras and were being sent to the Golconda camp. Abbé Carré's attempt to defend the conduct of the French, on the ground that the closing of all other avenues of supply had compelled them to seize whatever they found on the lands within their jurisdiction, irritated the English Governor all the more, who called a council of the interested citizens as well as some Golconda officers, and resolved to pillage all things which might be carried to St. Thomé. At the same time he strengthened the guards on the coastal route and even closed the country road which had previously been left open. This did not, of course, completely prevent Abbé Carré from sending things out, as he was an adept in the art of bribing the guards, but the laying of ambushes all along the route made it increasingly difficult for the goods to reach their destination.[2]

Abbé Carré, living quietly in the suburbs of Mad-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 404.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 404-5.

ras, gave the impresssion to ordinary people that he was a private French merchant, having nothing to do with the French of St. Thomé. He was therefore approached more freely even by men of the Golconda camp who came to him for various things *e.g.*, to get a French surgeon, or to secure his mediation for a compromise with the French of St. Thomé. On these occasions Abbé Carré could learn about the state of affairs in the Golconda camp, which he then passed on to de la Haye to take whatever action necessary. It was, in fact, doing the work of a spy, and however much we may be shocked at the degradation of an ecclesiastic, Frenchmen, who had seen Richelieu and Mazarin, had absolutely no scruples in the matter, although strangely enough Abbé Carré complained of the very same thing in Rev. Father Ephrem, but that was probably because the latter was serving the interests of the English. Nothing would have been said against him if he had worked and employed his powers of intrigue in the interest of the French.

On the 4th August two captains of the Golconda cavalry, who had come to Madras on some business, visited Abbé Carré and requested him to send a French surgeon to their camp to attend one of their generals. Abbé Carré replied that if the general could come to Madras, he would bring a French surgeon to attend him there. Then he learnt from the cavalry officers about the confusion in their camp and the great dissatisfaction at the conduct of the English and the Dutch, who were the only obstacles to the conclusion of peace which every body in the Golconda camp earnestly wished for.[1] This story was confirmed a few

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 409-10.

days later by the report of two Indian spies employed by Abbé Carré, who came back from the camp of the Golconda army and informed their master that General Trimbak Bussora Raju had recently received orders from the Court to hold on and had been told that he would shortly be sent re-inforcements in men and money. But the General was in no mood to rely on such long-deferred hopes, and moreover he had received some personal letters at the same time from his friends, informing him that the state of affairs at the capital was in great turmoil and confusion because of the threatened invasion of the country by the Mughal Emperor and the king of Bijapur. It was therefore extremely unlikely that any re-inforcements could be sent out to Trimbak. However, since he had definite orders to stay and being in dire need of money, Trimbak turned first to the English and then to the Dutch for a loan, but both the allies excused themselves on some pretext or other.[1]

On the 17th Abbé Carré was called to the house of his most helpful friend in Madras named Virenna, who was the Indian agent of the English Company. There he was met by two principal officers of the Golconda army, whom Trimbak Bussora Raju had sent to invite his mediation for a compromise with the French. The officers even showed Abbé Carré the copy of a letter which, they said, had been written by their general to the Court that it was impossible to do anything against St. Thomé after the way it had been fortified. Trimbak therefore proposed a truce for a month pending reply from the Court, and begged Abbé Carré to employ him-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 413.

self in the matter.[1] Abbé Carré immediately wrote to de la Haye, who invited the Golconda officers to St. Thomé. They went there on the 18th and were very cordially received, but negotiations broke down on a vital point, namely, the demand of the French that the Golconda forces must leave their camp immediately and retire to Poonamalee,[2] which Trimbak could not possibly do in defiance of the express orders from the Court. Nor was it profitable for the French to grant such a long-term truce, unless they could have the whole countryside free, from where they could get an uninterrupted supply of provisions. It cannot be ascertained definitely whether Trimbak was sincere in his peace offer or not, but de la Haye, a man always suspicious of others, believed that Trimbak, who had a very weak army at the time, only meant to protect his camp from French raids by the conclusion of a truce for a month, by which time re-inforcements were expected to arrive from Golconda. Whether that was true or not, de la Haye clearly perceived the weakness of the enemy, and decided to strike a hard and finishing blow before he had the time to regain strength. It will be seen later what a hard blow he did deliver.

Apart from the work of getting secret reports about the state of affairs in the enemy camp and passing them on to de la Haye, the chief work of Abbé Carré was to supply provisions to St. Thomé. There were two great difficulties in his way due to the rigorous policy of the English, first, difficulty about purchase, and second, difficulty about transport. It was not possible to make large purchases in the open market, because the mer-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 417.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 418.

chants had been threatened with dire consequences if they sold anything to the French, and also because there was not sufficient money at St. Thomé to pay for all the purchases in cash. But Abbé Carré seems to have been a very resourceful man, and he soon picked up wide popularity among the Indian merchants of the town by procuring the release of some of their servants captured by the French or by similar other acts of kindness. His most intimate friend and helper was one Virenna, the richest Indian merchant of Madras, who practically controlled all the business of the English. Through the help of Virenna and some other merchants Abbé Carré was able to purchase large quantities of wheat and other provisions in exchange for some merchandise which the French had got from the vessels captured by them.[1] Through this means he was even able to purchase a large number of swords in spite of the general prohibition of the English.

The question of transport presented much greater difficulties. The short coastal route was completely closed, and the English would not permit the transport of goods by sea even. De la Haye wrote to the English Governor to open the coastal route or to permit one of the French boats to carry provisions from Madras, to which the latter replied that it was impossible for him to do anything which could give offence to the king of Golconda.[2] In spite of all the rigours, however, Abbé Carré was sometimes able to smuggle things out to St. Thomé mainly through the help of the merchant Virenna.[3] But it was evident that not much relief could be sent in this secret way, and that some other

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 415.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 420, 432.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 417.

route must be found for sending supplies on a large scale. The only other route was a long and circuitous country road, and although it had also been later closed by the English, as we have seen already, Abbé Carré was able to send out secretly large quantities of provisions by this route.

While Abbé Carré was doing all that he could for the supply of provisions to St. Thomé, great praise must be given to another person, Director Baron, who through a merchant of the Company, Deltor, sent even his personal silver plates and other precious moveables to Madras to be disposed of there in exchange for food-stuffs.[1] But in spite of all these efforts and patriotic sacrifices it was becoming increasingly clear that with funds short and faced with the rigorous policy of the English, the French could not hope to get much help from outside.

Abbé Carré's third important duty at Madras was to watch the movements of French deserters who came there, and to try to persuade them to go back to the service of their nation. At this time desertions among the French were becoming dangerously common, because of several factors, despair of success, the harsh discipline of de la Haye, and the allurements of better pay and living offered by the foreign agents at Madras.[2]

The most sensational case of desertion happened on the 1st September (1673), when the Captain, de Champignolle, the Lieutenant and the Sub-Lieutenant of the ship *Le Breton*, left their service and came to Madras with the hope of being able to pass on to France on one

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 432.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 434.

of the English ships.[1] The story of the case is that these officers had been neglectful of their duties for a long time, and partly because of that and partly in order to reward the good services of de Maisonneuve, the latter had been appointed Chief of the Squadron by de la Haye, although he was much junior to de Champignolle, who naturally regarded himself as having better claims for the post. He complained against it to de la Haye, but failing to get any redress he decided to quit the service. The other two officers had no other complaint than that they had not been paid their arrears of salary for a long time. During the stay of these officers in the suburbs of Madras, in a garden-house of the French Capuchin Mission, Abbé Carré saw them several times, and tried to persuade them to go back to St. Thomé. But they insisted on a written assurance from de la Haye that their grievances would be redressed, which the latter would not give although he promised to receive them well. Shortly after English, Dutch and Golconda agents appeared on the scene to instigate these French officers, and there was no more hope of getting them back at St. Thomé. De la Haye requested the Governor of Madras not to give any passage to these deserters on board the English ships returning to Europe, which was readily granted, although the English Governor would not consent to send them back to St. Thomé as de la Haye had requested him to do at first.

It has been noticed already that nine English ships coming from Europe to Madras were instructed to divert their course and proceed straight to Masulipatam for fear of an attack by the Dutch fleet, which was then

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 439-42. See also Martin's *Mémoires*, I. pp. 514-15.

lying off St. Thomé. On the 9th August (1673) these ships came to Madras from Masulipatam, upon the news that the Dutch fleet had withdrawn. Coming to know that the French envoy to the Court of Golconda had returned by one of these English vessels from Masulipatam de la Haye sent two of his principal officers, de Maisonneuve and de Maillé to thank the Commander of the English fleet on his behalf and to bring back the French envoy.[1]

On the 14th Director Baron accompanied by three French officers went to see the Commander of the English fleet on board his ship, where he was met by the Governor of Madras also. Baron represented to them the advantage of joining together to fight against the common enemy, the Dutch, but the English would not listen to any proposal of alliance. They replied that being only businessmen, they knew nothing else but trade and commerce.[2]

On the 17th Baron again went to Madras to see the Commander and other officers of the English fleet to negotiate for the purchase of some food-stuffs and munitions, and also for a loan of money to be repaid at Surat where the fleet was believed to be going.[3]

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. p. 502.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 503. It is rather strange that Abbé Carré, who is usually so full of details, does not mention about the first visit of Baron, although he was residing in Madras and was in constant touch with both de la Haye and the English Governor.

3 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 415-16. It is interesting to see the English version which differs from the account given by Abbé Carré; *Records of Fort St. George: Diary and Consultation Book* (1672-78), p. 17 (Consultation, 9th August, 1673).

"The Agent going aboard the ship Loudon the 6th (O. S.) current whither Mons. Baron the French Director-General was come from the Viceroy Mons. De la Haye to speak with him, which it seems was to have borrowed money of him, but by the Agent civilly excused. The ships could not be persuaded from giving him the salutes usual on such occasions, al-

From the previous policy of the English the French should have realised that Baron's mission would be entirely fruitless. But they were not prepared for what actually happened. The Commander and other officers of the English fleet had been so much instigated against the French by the Governor of Madras and Jearsey, whose ship had been captured by de la Haye, that they were not only in no mood to do any kind of service to the French, but were also unwilling to render them even ordinary civility and courtesy. Having received information that Baron was coming to see them, they deliberately left their ships to spend the whole day in the town. They were probably induced to do so by the Governor himself, so that Baron could find nobody with whom he could treat. After spending the whole day on board the English ships, Baron sent information in the evening to Abbé Carré, who then came and took him and his companions to his house. Baron was greatly offended at the conduct of the English and had no desire to see the Governor. But through the help of the Capuchin Fathers who came to see Baron, the Commander of the English fleet was induced to come to Abbé Carré's house, where Baron requested him for some food-stuffs and munitions and for a loan of money to be repaid at Surat. But the Commander of the English fleet would not listen to any such proposals and declared that he had no authority over the goods and the money of the Company. Baron therefore returned to St. Thomé on the 18th very much enraged at the discourteous behaviour of the English. De la Haye understood the matter, and believing that the con-

though he desired the contrary, to suppress as much as possible the notice of the interview."

duct of the English was due wholly to the propaganda and instigation of Jearsey, he tried to remove any misconception by writing a long and detailed letter to the Commander of the English fleet justifying the capture of Jearsey's ship. De Maisonneuve was sent to deliver the letter on the 18th, but the English ships were getting ready to sail for Masulipatam, and he was not given an opportunity to see the Commander or any other officer. He went back to St. Thomé, and de la Haye immediately wrote a strong letter to the Governor of Madras protesting against the discourtesy shown to his officer.[1]

On the 19th the English fleet sailed away for Masulipatam to complete the loading of merchandise there, which was not ready at the time of its first visit. The departure of the ships was so hasty that few people knew the real reason, which was the news of the coming of a strong Dutch fleet. Rumours had, in fact, been current for a long time about the return of the Dutch fleet,[2] and de la Haye had written to the English Governor offering his four ships to accompany the English vessels up to Masulipatam.[3] But in spite of the fact that the addition of four ships would have considerably strengthened their fleet, the settled policy of the English not to enter into any sort of alliance with the French prevented them from accepting such an offer. However, the English ships were able to escape from Madras before the arrival of the Dutch fleet.

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 504-5.

2 The English were quite alarmed and were anxious to know the real strength and intentions of the Dutch fleet :—see *Records of Fort St. George : Diary and Consultation Book* (1672-78), pp. 14-15 (Consultations, 4th and 7th July, 1673).

3 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 418.

A strong Dutch fleet appeared before St. Thomé on the 22nd, and not being able to do anything against the town without the co-operation of the Golconda army on land, it withdrew and sailed north to Pulicat. The coming of the Dutch alarmed Madras more than St. Thomé, but on the 26th the English Governor was invited to a conference by the Dutch Admiral, Rijcklof, at a place a few miles from Madras on the road to Publicat.[1] At the meeting fair words passed between the two, and it was decided that though the two nations were at war in Europe, in the East they should live in peace and amity, concerning themselves with trade and commerce only. But in fact Rijcklof was already contemplating an attack on the English fleet, and the conference was arranged merely to disarm the English of all suspicions. It is doubtful how far he was thus able to deceive the English, who knew about the designs of the Dutch through their spies.

The English and the Dutch had their spies at Pulicat and Masulipatam respectively. Upon a secret warning that the Dutch fleet was preparing to go to Masulipatam to attack the English fleet, lying at anchor there, the English ships hastily left the place on the 1st September and sailed for Madras. When the news of the departure of the English ships reached Pulicat, the Dutch fleet proceeded immediately to intercept them. The two fleets met on the 4th September off Pettapoly (about 20 leagues to the south of Masulipatam), and almost immediately joined action which lasted for the whole day. Both sides suffered very heavy losses, and although the Dutch claimed a technical victory, they were actually in a worse plight than the English. On

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 430.

the side of the English three ships were captured, the biggest and the most richly laden ones, and four were very badly damaged, but the loss of personnel was not much great. The Dutch fleet also got a terrible battering and was in no condition to pursue the enemy. The Dutch lost heavily in personnel, nearly half their men being killed or wounded. Eight of their ships were put out of action, and their fleet was compelled to retire into the river Krishna for repairs.[1]

The seven English ships which had survived the combat with the Dutch fleet arrived at Madras on the 11th September in a very miserable plight. That was the first news that the English got about the disaster. When de la Haye came to know about it, he immediately wrote to the Governor of Madras, expressing great sympathy at the English losses and urging him to join with the French against the common enemy, the Dutch. He offered all the forces of St. Thomé for the defence of Madras in case the Dutch came to attack that town, as it was feared at the time. The English Governor thanked de la Haye for his sympathy, but politely refused his offer on the ground of having to maintain friendly relations with the king of Golconda.[2] Far from drawing closer, the English in spite of their dire necessity would not turn to the French even for an ordinary business deal. The battered English ships were in great need of repairs, and as the Governor of Madras was unwilling to supply riggings and other necessary things, some of the ships' officers were at first in favour of going to St. Thomé to seek the help

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 456-58, where a graphic description of the naval combat is given.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 448.

of the French. But the Governor of Madras, by his persistent propaganda, so set their minds against the French that they gave up the idea of going to St. Thomé, though they could have got there all the things they wanted and at little cost.[1]

About this time the Indian agent of the French Company at Masulipatam came to St. Thomé to submit the accounts of the settlement to Baron, who asked him if he could arrange for a loan of money at Masulipatam. The agent replied that he could easily procure a large sum of money, provided a safe route could be found to bring it to St. Thomé. Thereupon de la Haye wrote to Abbé Carré to ask the Governor of Madras whether he could pay money to the French at Madras if an equivalent amount be deposited in the English settlement at Masulipatam. It was in fact a very trifling matter involving no risk on the part of the English. But even then the Governor of Madras excused himself on the plea that there was already a considerable sum of money at Masulipatam which could not be utilised there. Abbé Carré then proposed that the English might make an advance of money at Madras, which would be paid back to them either at Bombay or at Surat where their fleet was going. But to this also the Governor of Madras would not agree on the ground that he had no authority over the money or goods of the Company. Being disappointed here Abbé Carré turned to his old friend Virenna, who agreed to give him any sum of money as soon as an equal amount had been deposited with Mahon, the Chief of the English settlement at Masulipatam.[2]

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 448.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 450-51.

In spite of his conciliatory policy the constant rebuffs de la Haye received from the English roused his anger, which was heightened by the news that the latter had again another conference with the Dutch on the 17th September at which it was decided to put a joint pressure upon St. Thomé. De la Haye immediately wrote a strong letter to the English Governor complaining against the wrong and injustice done to the French, the help given to the French deserters and the secret conferences between the English and the Dutch.[1] The letter had no other effect than antagonising the English Governor all the more, who began to show his jealousy and ill-will against the French more openly than before.

Finding no prospect of getting any help or reinforcement in any other way de la Haye at last decided to send Abbé Carré to Surat by one of the English ships to see if any help could be sent from there. From Surat he was to take the overland route and return to France to inform the Court about the state of affairs of the French in India and the urgent need of sending all possible help. Before starting from Madras on the 21st September (1673), Abbé Carré thanked the Governor for his civility and for all that he had done for the French, but the concealed taunt was well understood by the Englishman.[2]

Abbé Carré had rendered a good deal of service to the French during his short stay at Madras. He worked with the same zeal and devotion as any officer belonging to de la Haye's squadron. He was quite tactful and knew the art of managing men. It has already been noted how he drew round

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 460.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 462-63.

him some of the principal merchants of the town, from whom he got the fullest help and co-operation. With the English Governor he tried to be on the best of terms possible, and although sometimes hot words passed between the two, it was not due entirely to Abbé Carré's tactlessness, as has been suggested by Martin.[1] On the whole he was the fittest agent the French could have at Madras, and his departure from there, although necessitated by the dire need of help from outside, created a void which could not be filled up easily. There was only one other person of equal or probably greater abilities, Francois Martin, and we shall see later how he was made use of by de la Haye.

### 3. *Failure of Negotiations and Burning of the Golconda Camp*

It will be remembered that immediately after the return of de la Haye to St. Thomé, he took all measures necessary to put the town in a proper state of defence. As the wall on the northern side was rather low, he built a redoubt outside, named after the Commander he put there, d'Orgeret.[2] The Golconda forces were still lying in their camp about three leagues away, where they had withdrawn after the first siege of St. Thomé. We have already seen a little of the state of feelings in their camp. They did not venture out any more for a general action, but there were frequent skirmishes, which went mostly in favour of the French.

On the 9th July the Golconda generals sent an envoy to St. Thomé to parley with the French, but as he went accompanied by three hundred fully armed men,

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 513.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 497.

the French naturally mistook the object of the party and chased it back right up to its camp. Some of these men went to Madras to complain against the treachery and perfidous conduct of the French to Virenna, to whom Abbé Carré explained that the rules of warfare demanded that if a man went to parley he must go without arms and escort.[1] There was a second incident on the 12th, when Baba Sahib, accompanied by 1,500 horsemen, was going to Madras to pay a visit to the English Governor. On a secret warning from Abbé Carré de la Haye went out with a strong force to deliver a surprise attack. Baba Sahib turned back at the sight of the French and fled away to his camp, postponing the visit to Madras to another more favourable day.[2]

It has already been noticed that the Dutch fleet, after withdrawing from St. Thomé on the 27th June to go in search of de la Haye, anchored before Sadraspatam. The Dutch Governor of Pulicat, Pavillon, with an escort of 500 Indian troops started for Sadraspatam on the 14th July, and on his way he stopped at the Golconda camp. But Baba Sahib completely ignored him and did not wish to see him even. The reason was that Pavillon had written to the Court of Golconda that the Dutch fleet had been compelled to withdraw from before St. Thomé only because the Golconda army had remained quiet in its camp, without making any move at all against the French. Naturally the Golconda generals received some reprimands from the Court and had great difficulty in explaining their conduct.[3] They however laid the

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 397-98.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 399.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 400.

whole blame on the cowardice of the Dutch and on their failure to capture de la Haye's ship. The real thing was that the Golconda army had got completely tired of the war, in which it had only suffered terrible losses and had not won a single victory. Moreover, money was badly wanting, and there was no knowing when the long-expected re-inforcements would arrive. The Golconda generals therefore longed to get out of the war altogether, and to make up some sort of compromise with the French. But they were constantly frustrated by the intrigues of the Dutch at the Court, and hence arose their coolness towards the Dutch.

On the 18th July news reached St. Thomé that General Baba Sahib was gradually withdrawing his forces to the fortress of Poonamalee.[1] The withdrawal was done very secretly lest the French should get any wind of it. There remained in the camp only General Trimbak Bussora Raju with about 6,000 men in all. Even he would have probably retired but for the opposition of the English, who represented at the Court that the sudden withdrawal of the entire Golconda army would increase the aggression of the French, who would at once make themselves masters of the neighbouring countryside.[2] General Trimbak therefore remained in the camp in a sullen mood and in great and constant alarm of surprise attacks by the French. De la Haye came to know more about the state of things in the Golconda camp from three prisoners, who, threatened with death, gave out full information about their camp, the points along the river where guard-posts were maintained, the number of men at each post, and the way

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 402.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 404.

in which watch was being kept. They confessed that their army was weakening every day by desertions for arrears of pay.[1]

It will be remembered that General Trimbak Bussora Raju had sent two envoys on the 18th August to St. Thomé to negotiate for a truce, but the talks failed on the most vital point, namely the demand of the French that the Golconda army must withdraw from the camp and retire to the fortress of Poonamalee during the period of the truce, to which General Trimbak could not possibly agree in the absence of express orders from the Court. The suspicious mind of de la Haye led him to the conclusion that the Golconda general was not at all sincere in his peace offer, but only wanted to gain time till the arrival of re-inforcements from the capital. He had with him a very weak and dissatisfied army, an infantry of 2,500 men, untrained troops levied by force and not knowing the use of fire-arms, and a cavalry of five to six hundred men, who were better armed and trained.[2] The time was therefore most opportune for the French to strike a smashing blow. Moreover, it was strongly rumoured that the Dutch fleet, much more strengthened than before, was already on its way back to St. Thomé, and from the military point of view it would be the soundest move to knock the Golconda army out completely before the Dutch could arrive. The question of delivering an attack on the Golconda camp had been in the mind of de la Haye for a long time, and he had carefully obtained all necessary information. On the 20th August he called a council of war of all his principal officers,

[1] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 411.
[2] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 506.

where the matter was discussed in all its bearings. There were great dangers and difficulties to be encountered. The Golconda camp was very well fortified at the head and on the flanks by mud walls and a narrow ditch. The tail was left comparatively unprotected, but it was not easy to reach there. Secondly, it was unlikely that the raid would have any surprise effect, as there were Golconda spies among the Indian troops in the French service. Thirdly, in order to reach the camp the French would have to cross an open plain, where the Golconda cavalry would have a great advantage over them. Lastly, the garrison at St. Thomé had been much diminished in number, the major part of the men, who were sailors, were not so well-trained and disciplined, and it was unlikely that they would hold firm in their ranks. There were, of course, better troops, but it would be very dangerous to denude the town of its entire garrison. If the raid met with a disaster, the French would have no more resources to fall back upon. All these considerations were, however, balanced by the acute shortage of provisions in the town, which were not sufficient to last even for two months. It was already extremely difficult to procure anything from the countryside, and if re-inforcements came to the Golconda army, as expected, the position would become even more critical for the French. Moreover, the Golconda army was at the time extremely weak, and it was quite probable that it might be forced to abandon its camp by a surprise raid, and to leave the whole countryside to the French. Besides, a smashing blow at this stage would probably dispirit the Golconda army completely, and prevent it from coming back and laying siege to St. Thomé a second time. All these considerations weighed in the French counsels, and it

was ultimately decided to strike on the same day at midnight.[1]

The attacking party consisted of about five hundred Frenchmen in all, including sailors brought down from the ships for the occasion. There were also about four hundred Indian troops, and some artillery officers with two field-pieces. Leaving a small and insignificant garrison in the town, shortly before midnight the French sallied forth on the fateful expedition. De la Haye had carefully obtained all information from his spies and prisoners of war about the detours of the countryside and the defences of the enemy camp. The French reached the Golconda camp secretly and without any disturbance, but before they could deliver the attack the enemies got warning and greeted the raiders with a round of musketry fire. The French attacked immediately. The entrance to the camp on the northern side had been the only gate left open, to be used for flight in case of a surprise attack. The French closed that opening with their artillery, the fire from which created such a havoc that heaps of dead blocked the exit completely from within. However, many of the soldiers escaped by jumping over the entrenchments, and when the French entered the camp they met with practically no resistance at all. They put to the sword everybody they found, men, women and children. The slaughter was of the most frightful nature, and most of the dead were merchants, workers and other useless persons, who had lain in the camp with a sense of perfect security and had not the time to escape like the soldiers. The camp was pillaged from top to bottom despite the prohibition of de la Haye. In order to complete the work of destruction the French set fire

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 506-7.

to the camp, which was so full of combustible materials that the conflagration was visible for many miles around. The fire raged furiously throughout the night, and the French remained there to prevent the return of the Golconda forces who had retired across a small river. At day break on the 21st August the French prepared to return to St. Thomé. They decided to take with them a large number of horses, elephants, camels, cattle, and some rich baggages found in the camp. Keeping the animals in front, they started back in ordered formation, followed by the Golconda cavalry on both flanks. The enemies kept themselves at a respectful distance, beyond the range of musket-fire, and only watched for an opportunity to attack small and detached parties. They got one such opportunity indeed, and created great panic and disorder in the French ranks, but they had to pay a very heavy penalty and none of the dashing horsemen ever returned. After this the French proceeded quite undisturbed and reached St. Thomé in perfect safety. There was wild joy in the town and the French celebrated it as their most glorious victory over their enemies.[1]

### 4. *Return of the Dutch Fleet*

The French had delivered a very timely stroke, for on the 22nd August a fleet of twenty Dutch vessels was sighted coming from the south. The ships cruised round the roadstead of St. Thomé for sometime, seeking a suitable place for anchorage. Finding them rather afraid of approaching too near the place, the French fired a shot to let them understand that they were waiting to meet them with as good resolution as

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 423-25.

on the former occasion. This had the desired effect and the Dutch ships anchored outside the range of the French guns. Rijcklof, the Commander of the Dutch fleet, sent some officers to the Golconda camp to discuss about joint measures against the French. They saw nothing else in the camp but the still smoking debris and marks of frightful slaughter on all sides. Rijcklof realised the hopelessness of inducing the remnants of the Golconda army to come back, but he rested yet awhile before St. Thomé to wait for some more ships of his squadron, which arrived on the 23rd, and also to send some of his officers to Poonamalee to make a last attempt with the Golconda general. At Poonamalee the Dutch officers found the Golconda forces in the greatest panic and consternation, with General Trimbak Bussora Raju grievously wounded, a large number of the principal officers killed and disabled, and all their equipments left in the hands of the French. The Dutch were very coldly received and were regarded as the real cause of the disaster. To their proposal of delivering a joint attack upon St. Thomé, General Trimbak replied that he would not even consider it till the Dutch had handed over 200,000 pagodas to him and had landed 50,000 men.[1] The Dutch in spite of their powerful fleet were not yet strong enough to take St. Thomé without the help of the Golconda army, and upon the final refusal of Trimbak to join with them, they raised anchor a second time from before St. Thomé and sailed north to Pulicat.

De la Haye, who realised the importance of making up a compromise with the king of Golconda before he definitely allied himself with the Dutch, wrote

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 429.

to him on the 26th August that although he had driven away the Golconda army and burnt its camp, he was nonetheless desirous of peace. At the same time he wrote to Destremeau, a French physician at the Court of Golconda, to keep him regularly informed about the state of affairs at the Court and to exert himself as best as possible to bring about a settlement.[1]

On the 27th, having again received some letters of complaint from the French prisoners at Batavia, de la Haye sent de la Motte, an officer of the ship *Le Breton*, to Pulicat. In a letter to Rijcklof he complained against the continued detention of the French prisoners at Batavia, in violation of the terms of capitulation made at Trinkomali, according to which the prisoners should have been sent back to Europe at the earliest possible moment. The French officer was very honourably received at Pulicat with gun salutes and other ceremonies. Rijcklof was profuse in courtesies, but with regard to the main thing he replied that after he had sent the French prisoners to Batavia, he had no longer any authority over them.[2]

The burning of the Golconda camp and the departure of the Dutch fleet from St. Thomé left the French completely free to explore the surrounding countryside and to bring in provisions as much as possible. De la Haye, accompanied by some of his personal guards, went out on ride everyday through the neighbouring villages and made the people bring rice and other food-stuffs to St. Thomé by threats or persuasions,[3] and not unfrequently the French seized by force herds of cattle carrying foodgrains and other things. On one such occasion de la Haye seized a

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. p. 511.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 512-13. See also Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 431.

3 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 430.

number of horses carrying clothing materials to Madras, belonging to the English Company. It created great excitement among the English, and upon a request from the Governor of Madras the animals with their loads were returned.[1]

It has already been noted that the Dutch fleet sailed north to Pulicat having been frustrated in the design upon St. Thomé owing to lack of co-operation from the Golconda forces. The Dutch then decided to strike a surprise blow against the English fleet. The result was the naval combat between the two fleets on September 4, in which the Dutch were nearly as much worsted as the English. Rijcklof, however, remained at Pulicat fortifying the Dutch settlement there, which led to a quarrel with the Muslim Governor of the place, who declared that he had orders from his master, the king of Golconda, not to allow any European nation to construct fortifications without his permission. The Dutch paid little heed to the opposition of the Governor, and the latter, afraid of their great influence at the Court, retired to his country-seat, so as to be able to pretend not to have any knowledge of the construction of fortifications by the Dutch.[2]

In the fortress of Poonamalee there was still great consternation at the latest feat of the French. Besides, there was a good deal of dissatisfaction among the troops, who had not received arrears of pay for several months. The former Commander, Baba Sahib, who had been recalled sometime back, had been thoroughly discredited and had been replaced by another General,

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 513.

[2] Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 426. Kaeppelin states that Rijcklof remained at Pulicat while the Dutch fleet sailed for Masulipatam so that he might disclaim all official responsibility for the attack on the English fleet—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, pp. 112-13.

Chinapelly Mirza. There was only one encouraging factor, namely, the news that strong re-inforcements were already on their way to Poonamalee under the command of the new general. It was due entirely to the intrigues and persuasions of the Dutch, who, as soon as they came to know about the despatch of re-inforcements, started raising troops from the villages neighbouring to Pulicat and making all necessary preparations. They also sent some officers again with considerable presents to the fortress of Poonamalee to induce the fugitive Golconda army to return to the campaign against the French. General Trimbak, not yet ready to make any definite commitment, preferred at first to wait till the arrival of the new general with re-inforcements and orders from the Court. But the lure of Dutch gold was too much to resist, and having accepted it he had no other option but to show his inclination towards the Dutch proposal. Moreover, the whole army was smarting under the last and the most disastrous defeat, and was determined to avenge itself upon the French as best as possible. Since nothing could be gained against the French by force of arms, it was decided to resort to a different method of warfare, namely, harrying and devastating the neighbouring villages which supplied food-stuffs to St. Thomé and thus starving out the garrison.[1]

### 5. *Laying of a Second Siege by the Combined Dutch and Golconda Forces*

By the middle of September (1673) both the Dutch and the Golconda forces were ready for action. Five hundred Dutch troops had been landed at Sadraspatam, from where they marched north to effect a junc-

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, p. 445.

tion with the Golconda army and the forces under Rijcklof numbering about 800 men, who had marched south from Pulicat. On the 17th the two Dutch forces combined and encamped on the site of the old Golconda camp. But a few days later they approached nearer, within sight of St. Thomé. The presence of the Dutch so near Madras threw the English into great panic and consternation, as after the recent naval combat with their fleet they had a reasonable apprehension that the Dutch might turn against Madras, which was not so well defended and which would yield a much richer booty than St. Thomé. Probably that was the original intention of the Dutch, as the English were not only at war with them in Europe, but were also their most dangerous commercial rival in the East. But the king of Golconda was definitely against any plan of attacking Madras, which compelled the Dutch to concentrate their attention entirely on St. Thomé. Failing in their plan against Madras, the Dutch wanted to protect their rear by concluding a mutual pact of non-aggression with the English. Rijcklof called the English to a conference and told their representatives that he had received a letter from the Court of Golconda to do nothing against Madras and that he would now turn all his forces against St. Thomé. He then urged the English to combine with the Dutch in destroying completely their common enemy and commercial rival. There was discussion also on the recent naval fighting, and upon the demand of the English the Dutch promised to liberate all the English officers and sailors whom they had taken prisoners. The Anglo-Dutch conference thus ended to the apparent satisfaction of both the parties.[1]

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 459-60.

On the 21st September there came to St. Thomé an envoy from the Dutch camp, named Tacq, who was received with all possible honours. He held conference with de la Haye for a long time and had a second interview later on the same day. The object of his visit is not at all clear. He might have come either to summon the French to surrender the place or to observe the state of defences of the town. In any case he did not achieve anything. De la Haye deliberately made a grand display of the whole garrison under arms, with 300 pieces of artillery mounted at all strategic points. It must have impressed the Dutch envoy and made him realise the hopelessness of taking the place by assault.[1]

The Dutch raised their camp again on the 24th and took up their position in the pagoda of Triplicane, half-way between Madras and St. Thomé. The Golconda army encamped to their right, about half a mile away. There were almost daily skirmishes between the French and the combined Dutch and Golconda forces. On the 26th Rijcklof, with three to four hundred men and accompanied by the Golconda general, Chinapelly Mirza, at the head of a corps of cavalry, proceeded towards an old Church near St. Thomé for the purpose of reconnoitring it. He probably had the intention of fortifying it so as to be able to invest St. Thomé from closer quarters. De la Haye immediately started out with two hundred men. In the ensuing encounter the Dutch had the worst of it and withdrew to Triplicane.[2]

1 Abbé Carré—*Le Courier de l'Orient*, pp. 463-64. See also Martin's *Mémoires*, I, pp. 517-18.

2 *Mémoires de François Martin*, I, p. 519. It was the Luz Church; about 1,200 feet from the walls of the town.

The Dutch and the Golconda forces kept themselves entrenched in their own camps, which they strongly fortified, and only went out in small parties to burn the villages to the south of St. Thomé, from where the French received considerable supplies of provisions. On every such occasion strong French parties also sallied out either to attack the enemies or to create a diversion by marching towards their camp. But the French always avoided a pitched battle, as they were not prepared for it with such unequal forces. They erected more fortifications outside the walls of the town, particularly in front of the Royal Gate, and cut down all the trees and jungles between St. Thomé and Triplicane, which might have been utilised by their enemies for laying ambushes.

About the beginning of October Rijcklof, probably considering that the reduction of St. Thomé would take a long time, started back for Ceylon, leaving the command to Pavillon, Governor of Pulicat. Several Dutch vessels anchored before Triplicane and landed re-inforcements of men and munitions. Halfway between the pagoda of Triplicane and the coast the Dutch built a small wooden fort, which they named after their commander, Pavillon. They raised a battery there and kept a garrison of 100 men to protect disembarkation from their ships.[1] If the French had their old fleet intact they could easily have prevented the Dutch ships from landing re-inforcements so near St. Thomé, but now they were quite powerless to do anything.

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 522. The departure of Rijcklof freed the English from all anxiety and they disbanded most of the troops newly raised to defend Madras against a probable Dutch attack—*Records of Fort St. George—Diary and Consultation Book* (1672-78), pp. 18-19.

De la Haye received letters from Baba Sahib, the old Golconda general, and envoys from the new general, Chinapelly Mirza, for exploring avenues to peace. But nothing came out of these negotiations and it seems doubtful that the Golconda generals were really desirous of peace. If they were, they could not do anything against the intrigues of their Dutch allies at the Court. On the 18th (October) de la Haye sent Deltor to Madras to take the place of Abbé Carré there, with instructions to give all possible information about the disposition of Dutch and Golconda forces and also to find out means to send food-stuffs to St. Thomé.[1] But things had moved further than during Abbé Carré's time. The English had drawn much closer towards the Dutch, and it was absolutely impossible for Deltor to send any help to St. Thomé.

De la Haye decided on a *coup* on the 28th October. There were at the time four French ships in the roadstead of St. Thomé, *Le Breton*, *Le Saint Jean de Bayonne*, a hooker belonging to the king, *Le Guillot*, and a hooker belonging to the Company *Le Saint-Robert*. The Dutch had only three ships anchored before Fort Pavillon. It was quite easy to surprise the Dutch ships and capture them at anchor, which would, for a time at least, make that part of the sea free for the French. Moreover, the capture of their ships would greatly discredit the Dutch, and there was just a chance that their Golconda allies might come to separate terms with the French. On the 27th the whole garrison was called, before which de la Haye put forth these convincing arguments. There was an unanimous opinion in favour of the *coup*, and preparations were taken in hand immediately. De la Haye

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 524.

himself embarked on *Le Breton* with his guards and twenty musketeers, and the rest of the expeditionary force was distributed on the other three ships. As the captain of *Le St. Jean de Bayonne* was not a man capable of vigorous action, another, more experienced, officer was placed above him, and a third one to command them both. The multiplicity of command naturally created much confusion and bitterness of feelings. Besides, de la Haye, as was usual with him, did not give any positive orders to these officers, but simply told them to do just as *Le Breton* did. We shall see later the bad effects of these two things, which ultimately ruined the expedition when there was a real chance of success. *Le Breton* proceeded first with *Le Guillot* to support her, followed by *Le St. Jean de Bayonne*, which was supported by *Le Saint-Robert*. The ships sailed out on the 28th shortly before daybreak, and with the wind in their favour they advanced towards the Dutch ships lying at anchor. *Le Breton*, which had proceeded faster, finding at midway that the other ships were far behind, slowed down her speed. The orders of de la Haye were followed to the letter by the captain of *Le St. Jean de Bayonne*, who immediately slowed down the speed of his ship also, although there were people on board who realised that *Le Breton* had done it only to wait for the other ships. De la Haye naturally got angry and ordered the captain of *Le Breton*, Chevalier de Maisonneuve, to proceed straight to the Dutch ships, which was a very daring act. *Le Breton*, passing the first two Dutch ships, proceeded straight to the third one, and it seemed that the French would be able to board that vessel. But at this most critical moment, de Maisonneuve through an error of judgment, fearing that his ship

would be carried along further up, gave orders to clew up the fore-mast, which gave the Dutch ship just enough time to escape to the open sea. The French ship could not follow her up because of the damage to her sails caused by enemy fire. *Le St. Jean de Bayonne* had come upon the scene by this time, but in stead of proceeding closer to the other two Dutch ships fired upon them from a long distance, which gave them time like the first one to escape to the open sea. *Le Breton* gave them a hot chase to a distance of three leagues, but the Dutch ships sailed faster, and when they disappeared out of sight, the French ship came back in the evening to St. Thomé, where the other ships had also returned. De la Haye was wild with anger at the deliberate negligence of duty of the officers of *Le St. Jean de Bayonne*, and put two of them to arrest. But that could not undo the loss caused by their misconduct.[1]

The officers of the ship *Le St. Jean de Bayonne* felt themselves aggrieved and soon they got an opportunity to desert. On the 3rd and 4th November there was a furious gale, and fearing that they might be dashed against the coast, *Le St. Jean de Bayonne* and the two hookers raised their anchors and sailed out to the open sea. *Le Breton*, which was a stronger ship, still remained at anchor, but apprehending that with the increasing violence of the gale she might be compelled to leave the coast, de la Haye prepared detailed instructions for her captain, Chevalier de Maisonneuve, that if he could not return within two days, he should go to Achin, load victuals there and then come back to St. Thomé. Similar detailed instructions were prepared for the captains of the other three ships also, but

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 526-28.

these were useless, as the ships had already left the coast and did not return any more.[1]

*Le St. Jean de Bayonne*, after leaving the coast, sailed straight south without making any attempt to return, and arrived before Tranquebar. There was a south wind on the 6th and the 7th, which could have been easily utilised by the ship to go back to St. Thomé. But her captain and other officers, except one, Changon, were already badly intentioned and seeking for an opportunity to desert. On the excuse that the ship was leaking badly they decided to beach her, which was done on the 7th. The debris, riggings, sails etc., were saved and stored pending orders from de la Haye. The hooker *Le Guillot*, after sailing straight south, doubled Ceylon and reached the island of Anjouan, from where she returned to Surat at the end of 1674. *Le Saint-Robert* met with a different fate. Leaking very badly, and without any food-stuffs on board, she was wrecked on the coast belonging to the Nayak of Madura, whose officers seized the debris of the ship and put the men under arrest. Upon a demand from the Dutch, the prisoners were handed over to them and taken to Negapatam. On the 1st December de la Haye received letters from de l'Espinay at Pondicherry informing him about the intention of the captain and other officers of the ship *Le St. Jean de Bayonne* to go to Goa by land and from there to return to Europe. De la Haye immediately wrote to them to wait at Tranquebar for further orders. He also requested the Governor of Tranquebar to advance money for the subsistence of the Frenchmen till means could be found for sending them back to St. Thomé.[2] But the

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 520.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 536-38.

officers paid no heed to de la Haye's orders and followed their original intention. They did not, however, reach Goa, being involved and killed in a brawl with the inhabitants of a village while passing through Bijapur territories.[1]

### 6. *Military Operations*

Let us now return to the military operations round St. Thomé. Strongly fortified in their own town, and therefore free from the anxiety of being delivered frontal assaults, the French frequently led out raiding parties over the surrounding plains to prevent their enemies from approaching nearer, to cut off their small detachments, to drive out their advance posts, to terrorise them by surprise night-attacks, and finally to explore the countryside and to bring in provisions. On the 8th November, the French captured about six to seven hundred cattle carrying rice to the enemy camp, and brought them all to St. Thomé in spite of a stiff opposition from the Dutch and Golconda forces. There was a second and more important engagement on the 9th, when de la Haye with two hundred men marched towards the pagoda of Triplicane where the Dutch had entrenched themselves. Having advanced successfully within a musket-shot of the pagoda, the French began to retreat for fear of being ambushed if they proceeded further, when on the other side there appeared at some distance a body of Golconda cavalry, returning from a raiding expedition to some villages south of St. Thomé. Caught between the Dutch on one side and the Golconda cavalry on the other, the small French party was quite panic-stricken,

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 548.

and the retreat almost became a rout. However, order was restored by the officers with great difficulty and the party safely made its way back to St. Thomé.[1]

There was an important skirmish on the 21st, when a party of Dutch and Indian troops, supported by a body of Golconda cavalry, advanced towards St. Thomé. De la Haye sent out against them an able officer, de la Sauvagère, with fifty Indian troops, and later went out himself at the head of his guards and volunteers. The guns on the bastions of the town also did good work, and after a hot engagement lasting for three hours the enemies withdrew.[2]

Early in December there was a large-scale engagement. It was originally intended by the French as a skirmish against an advance-post of the Golconda army. But it later developed into a pitched battle, and a large number of troops came out of the Dutch and Golconda camps. The Dutch were the first to advance, and when de la Haye feigned retreat, they broke up their formation and attempted to pursue the French. The ruse succeeded and the French turned round and attacked the Dutch. The latter fled away, pursued by the French up to the crossing of a small river, beyond which de la Haye did not like to advance. After this vigorous action the French decided to attack the Golconda cavalry, but just as they were ready to attack, news was brought to de la Haye about the death of de Rebrey, Governor of St. Thomé, who had been killed accidentally by a cannon shot from the town. The news spread quickly and created such a consternation among the French that de la Haye immediately withdrew his troops to St. Thomé without giving battle to the.

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 530-32.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 535.

Golconda cavalry.[1] But for the news of de Rebrey's death the French would have won the day.

The French at St. Thomé were badly in want of money. They had received no relief from France, and the help which Baron brought with him from Surat was extremely small. In November, 1673 news reached St. Thomé about the arrival of a Company's ship, *Le Soleil d'Orient*, at Surat, carrying a rich cargo for the Company and two hundred thousand livres from the Government for the relief of the squadron, under the charge of an agent of the Paymaster of the Navy. It was surprisingly good news for the French, and de la Haye immediately wrote to him to wait there for further orders.

Being encouraged by the news of the safe arrival of a large sum of money from France, de la Haye wrote to Sher Khan Lody to come to the assistance of the French with five hundred horsemen. With this help he expected to be able to defeat the Dutch and Golconda forces and raise the siege of St. Thomé. He offered very advantageous terms to Sher Khan Lody, the most important being money, without which, it was clear, nothing could be obtained. He also wrote to de l'Espinay at Pondicherry to see Sher Khan and to persuade him to take the side of the French. On the 27th November de la Haye received a reply from de l'Espinay that he found Sher Khan Lody quite well-disposed towards the French and ready to come to their assistance at the head of a strong cavalry, but as fresh troops had to be levied he was absolutely unwilling to make any move at all unless he got money in advance to cover the necessary expenses.[2]

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 541-43.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 535-37. Bellanger de l'Espinay states that de la Haye wanted 15,000 men from Sher Khan Lody under the command of his son;—see his *Mémoires*, p. 216.

By the end of the year 1673 the position of the French at St. Thomé had become difficult indeed. As against the deepening gloom, the only hopeful factors were the arrival of money from France and the prospect of getting some help from Sher Khan Lody and other neighbouring Indian Princes. In the next Chapter will be described how these last hopes were dashed to the ground, and the French were compelled to sue for peace. Things were slowly but inevitably leading to that end, and no amount of personal bravery and patriotic sacrifices could compensate for the lack of re-inforcements from outside.

# CHAPTER X

## Last Struggle and Capitulation

1. Situation at St. Thome—January, 1674. 2. Martin's negotiations with Sher Khan Lody and other neighbouring Princes and his efforts to relieve St. Thomé. 3. St. Thomé—from January to September, 1674. 4. Capitulation decided upon. 5. Terms of Capitulation. 6. Execution of the Treaty. 7. Retrospect.

### *1. Situation at St. Thomé—January, 1674*

In spite of a series of successful skirmishes during the previous six months, at the beginning of January, 1674, the pressure of the siege was really telling upon the French. Food-stuffs had run short and the garrison was very effectively shut in both by land and sea. There was no prospect of getting any immediate relief. The situation was therefore difficult indeed, and to ease it only three things could be done; first, to send out all useless persons in the town who only constituted a drain on the existing food stock; second, to make more vigorous efforts to gain the help of some Indian Princes in order to lift the siege; and third, to make a last and desperate attempt to capture the Golconda camp in the hope that it might break up the alliance with the Dutch and end the siege.

On the 8th January de la Haye called all his officers to council to decide what to do, particularly with reference to an attack on the Golconda camp. Some of them expressed their readiness to do whatever he himself thought best, while others represented that the attack on the Golconda camp would be much too risky a venture, and that even if successful it would not bring any real advantage. It might be possible for the French

to capture the Golconda camp, but the enemy cavalry could easily escape over the open plains and could come back the next day. Then there were the Dutch, strongly entrenched in the pagoda of Triplicane. So that even if the Golconda camp was captured, it would not bring any material advantage compared with the tremendous risk involved in making the attempt, which would mean denuding the town of practically its entire garrison. In the end the action was postponed, and in view of the current rumours that help from France would not be long in coming, it was decided to turn out all useless persons, to send back a part of the Indian troops and to retrench food rations. In this way the French hoped to be able to carry on for three months more, by which time their long-expected help from France might arrive and they might get some more favourable opportunity to attack their enemies.[1]

On the 9th de la Haye harangued the garrison at the parade ground on the difficulty of the situation, and himself set the example about retrenched food rations. 1200 useless persons, mostly women in the service of the French soldiers, were ordered out of the town, and even all the Indian troops, except sixty, were dismissed. Some of them went over to the Dutch, and some were recruited by the English at Madras.[2]

### *2. Martin's negotiations with Sher Khan Lody and other neighbouring Princes and his efforts to relieve St. Thomé*

De la Haye next turned to seek outside help more actively in order to relieve the food situation and

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 550-51.

2 *Records of Fort St. George—Diary and Consultation Book* (1672-78), p. 20 (*Consultation*, 12th Feb., 1674).

also to lift the siege, if possible: Although he had not forgotten his old bitterness against Francois Martin, he realised that Martin was the fittest person for the job and decided to send him to Pondicherry, to which Martin readily agreed. There were two routes to Pondicherry, by land and by sea, both equally risky because of the strict watch maintained by the enemies, and in the end it was decided to take the sea-route. On the 12th Martin received detailed instructions about his duties. He was charged with letters for the French Court which he was to send by way of Surat, and also letters for the king of Cochin and for the Zamorin of Calicut, which were to be sent through de Flacourt, Chief of the French factories on the Malabar coast. There were also letters for the Nayak of Madura, for the ruler of Jinji, and for Sher Khan Lody. Martin's first task was to get the help of troops from these Princes, and second, to send food-stuffs to St. Thomé. He carried orders with him from de la Haye to the agent of the Paymaster of the Navy at Surat to pay him at his orders 70,000 livres. Baron also wrote to the merchants of the Surat settlement to pay 60,000 livres and to send food-stuffs to St. Thomé as early as possible.[1] Martin started from St. Thomé on the 13th January in a small boat, with some of the useless persons who were being sent out of the besieged town. Pondicherry was reached on the 14th and as Martin was badly in need of money, he decided first to see Sher Khan Lody and negotiate for an advance. The latter was staying at his

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 554. The men in charge of the Surat settlement at the time were Adam and Pilavoine.

Capital, Valikandapuram.[1] Martin arrived there on the 21st with a Christian interpreter Antonio Cattel, and had an interview with Sher Khan. The latter was very badly disposed towards the Dutch, and was quite willing to come to the relief of St. Thomé, but he definitely wanted money in advance to meet the cost of levying new troops. Martin then told him about the arrival of French money at Surat, and requested him to provide a safe route for bringing it. He also begged for an immediate advance of 1,000 pagodas. Sher Khan consented to both but wanted 5% interest on the bill of exchange, and 3% per month as interest on the money advanced. There was no alternative for Martin but to accept these terms.[2]

Martin left Valikandapuram on the 25th and started for Porto Novo where he reached on the 27th. There he met Veron, captain of the frigate, *La Diligente*, which had been beached there sometime back, and decided to put the boat to sea again at the earliest possible opportunity with food-stuffs for St. Thomé. But as the boat required some riggings Martin started for Tranquebar to get from there the riggings of the ship *Le St. Jean de Bayonne*.[3]

Martin started for Tranquebar on the 1st February and reached there the next day. He managed to have an interview with the Danish Governor after great difficulty. The latter appeared definitely unfriendly and complained against the illegal capture by the French of a Danish boat, loaded with rice, and he also showed the letters he had received from de la Haye in explanation, which were very unwisely worded and pro-

1 Eight miles north north-east of Perambalur;—S. N. Sen—*Foreign Biographies of Shivaji*, p. 268, foot-note.

2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 557-58.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 559.

vocative. Martin did his best to appease his anger, but he flatly refused to allow any of the riggings of the French ship to be removed without first receiving payment of the money he had advanced for the subsistence of the ship's crew. In the end he agreed to allow some of the minor things to be taken, but this permission was nullified by his double-dealing. He secretly sent word to the Dutch at Negapatam that the French were removing some of the riggings of their ship *Le St. Jean de Bayonne* from Tranquebar to Porto Novo to refit their frigate *La Diligente* in order to send her back to St. Thomé loaded with provisions. The result was that the Dutch immediately sent some armed ships to Tranquebar, Porto Novo, Pondicherry, and Tegnapatam [1] (within the jurisdiction of Sher Khan, where they had a settlement) in order to frustrate the plans of the French.[2]

From Porto Novo Martin wrote to the Nayak of Madura and sent him de la Haye's letter also. He started for Pondicherry on the 14th February and reached there the same day. At Pondicherry Martin, de l'Espinay and Antonio Cattel held conference to consider the unexpected difficulties in sending relief to St. Thomé. It was decided to send a Brahmin, Narasingham, to the Court of Jinji to know whether an embassy from the French would be received there or not. It was also decided to raise contingents of local troops independently from the neighbouring villages, which might later on be added to any possible help from some of the Indian Princes. Regarding the problem of

1 It was also known as Devanampatam and was about 12 miles south of Pondicherry; S. N. Sen—*Foreign Biographies of Shivaji*, p. 266, foot-note.

2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 564-65; also *Journal du Voyage des Grandes Indes*, II, p. 165.

sending food-supplies to St. Thomé, only one way was open and that also of a very doubtful advantage. A large number of country boats laden with rice regularly sailed from Cuddalore for the south, and on their way they stopped at Porto Novo, where some of them could easily be captured and sent to St. Thomé. But Porto Novo belonged to the ruler of Jinji, and such an illegal action would surely lose for the French any hope of getting help from him. Martin therefore wrote to de la Haye for express orders on the subject. In the meantime the Dutch were not sitting idle. They tried to enlist the ruler of Jinji and even Sher Khan Lody on their side, and by means of rich presents succeeded in completely winning over the havildar or governor of Porto Novo.[1] To Sher Khan the Dutch held out the tempting offer of giving passports to his ships to Malacca, Bantam or anywhere else that he might wish to send them, threatening him, if he did not take their side, with the complete destruction of his trade and commerce. But for a long time Sher Khan resisted both their offers and threats.[2]

Narasingham having brought a favourable reply from Jinji, Martin started for that place on the 5th March and reached there on the 7th. The ruler of Jinji was one Nasir Mohammed, brother of Khawas Khan, the all-powerful minister of Bijapur who governed the kingdom under a boy king of six or seven years. Nasir Mohammed had a strong and well-armed cavalry of 2,000 men, but he was in constant need of money, as his revenue was very small and quite insignificant compared with the expenses of his debauched Court. He was quite willing to sell his alliance to any European

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. pp. 568-69
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 573.

power in exchange for money. Martin had an interview with Nasir Mohammed himself as well as with his negro minister, Sidi Darvez, but he could get nothing from them unless he agreed to pay 50,000 pagodas, which he could not, first because the sum demanded was much too excessive, and second because he had no authority to promise anything.[1] Martin started back from Jinji on the 12th and reached Pondicherry on the 13th (March, 1674).

Having received positive orders from de la Haye, Martin immediately wrote to Veron, captain of *La Diligente*, to put into action the old plan of capturing some country boats, laden with rice, at Porto Novo, and of sending them to St. Thomé. But the thing had to be done with the greatest amount of secrecy and caution in order to elude the vigilant watch of the Dutch at all the ports on the coast and also of the local governor who had been completely won over by them. Towards the end of March the French carried out their plan, taking advantage of the darkness of the night and the complete suddenness of the blow. Martin wrote to de la Haye not to allow any of the men captured on these boats to escape lest they should give out the story of the illegal activities of the French at Porto Novo. But although it was done secretly, it was clear that the game could not be played very long, and it had to be given up with the desertion of a French sailor on the 27th March, who went over to the Dutch settlement at Tegnapatam and probably gave out the whole story.[2] The Dutch prohibited the loading of country boats at Cuddalore, and also compelled the merchants of that

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 575-77.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 582-85; see also *Journal du Voyage des Grandes Indes*, II, pp. 172-73 and *Mémoires de Bellanger de l'Espinay*, p. 155.

place not to sell anything to the French, nor to enter into any agreement with them.

The Dutch were doing their best to bring pressure upon Sher Khan to drive the French out of Pondicherry. They sent strong re-inforcements from Negapatam to their settlement at Tegnapatam, within Sher Khan's jurisdiction, to make a surprise attack upon the fortress there and also upon Pondicherry. They seized one of Sher Khan's ships by way of intimidation. They won over the ruler of Jinji and persuaded him to take up arms against Sher Khan. They complained against him to his suzerain, the king of Bijapur, and finally brought pressure upon him through the king of Golconda and his general, Chinapelli Mirza. Practically the whole of the Coromandel coast was arrayed against the French, and their only friend was Sher Khan. Sher Khan wavered for a long time, and in the end yielded to the combined pressure only to the extent of asking the French at Pondicherry to leave the town and to retire to an adjoining forest for their own safety against the Dutch. But Martin was adamant and refused to leave Pondicherry, feeling his position strong with the 200 newly raised local troops. He was however wise enough to enter into an agreement with a petty poligar, to whom the forest belonged, to build some huts in it and to remove munitions and other things there. In spite of repeated alarms of an attack upon Pondicherry, nothing untoward happened.[1] In April Martin received news about the tragic death of Malfosse, the French agent at Masulipatam. He had made an unsuccessful attempt to send provisions to St. Thomé which came to the knowledge of the Dutch. They complained vigorously at the Court of Golconda against the con-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 601-5.

duct of the Governor of Masulipatam, whom they accused of being in complicity with the French. The Governor received a sharp reprimand and tried to atone for his conduct by seizing all the Frenchmen at Masulipatam. Malfosse was killed as he tried to resist, but the others had just time enough to escape to Bengal in a small boat.[1]

Martin received encouraging replies from some of the Princes on the Malabar coast and also from the Nayak of Madura. But he had the good sense to realise that nothing absolutely could be gained from them unless he was prepared to pay for it, which he was not,—not having money even to meet the expenses of the customary presents to be made to these Princes while visiting their Courts for the first time.

On the 20th May, 1674, Antonio Cattel brought information from Sher Khan Lody that the French bills of exchange had not been honoured at Surat. Sher Khan had sent the bills to his master, the Generalissimo of the Bijapur army, and the latter had despatched two horsemen to Surat immediately to receive payment. When payment was refused Sher Khan's master naturally became irritated, and Sher Khan was placed in an awkward position. Antonio Cattel also brought with him letters from the merchants of the Surat settlement. They wrote that they could not honour the bill of exchange drawn upon them for 60,000 livres as they did not have sufficient money in hand, and that regarding the other bill for 70,000 livres, Chevreuil, the agent of the Paymaster of the Navy upon whom the bill had been drawn, had already left for Bijapur, carrying with him a part of the money he had brought and bills of exchange for the rest, which he

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. pp. 606-7.

had handed over to an Indian merchant of Golconda.[1] This unexpected refusal to pay money at Surat fell as a tremendous blow upon the French. Effectively shut in within the walls of St. Thomé, with an acute shortage of provisions and munitions, with growing demoralisation in their ranks and increasing desertion, their only hope lay in gaining help from outside. Alliance with some of the Princes on the Coromandel coast could have been purchased quite easily with money, and money the French really had, as 200,000 livres had recently been brought from France. But at the most critical moment everything was upset either through the criminal negligence of the men at Surat and of Chevreuil in particular, or through an accidental combination of adverse circumstances.

The conduct of the merchants of the French settlement at Surat deserves the greatest condemnation. They refused to honour the bill of exchange drawn upon them for 60,000 livres on the plea that they did not have sufficient money in hand. But at the time the credit of their Company stood high, and it would not have been difficult to get the amount by borrowing. They had been kept regularly informed by Baron about the state of affairs at St. Thomé, and they should have realised that money and provisions were very badly needed there. The only excuse that might be put in for them is that they had expected that since Chevreuil had already started, he would reach St. Thomé in time to deliver the money. The conduct of Chevreuil also cannot be blamed too strongly. He knew about the great distress at St. Thomé, and yet after leaving Surat in February he made an extremely leisurely progress, halted too long at every place of importance,

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 617.

and did not reach Pondicherry till about six months later. Even after reaching Pondicherry he made difficulties about delivering the money to Martin, and when at last he realised his error and the harm it had caused, it was then too late as the capitulation of St. Thomé had already been decided upon.

The immediate effect of the refusal of payment at Surat was that Sher Khan dismissed the cavalry he had maintained for three months at his own expense, and which he had intended to send to the relief of St. Thomé, and his friendship for the French naturally cooled down to some extent. Martin tried his best to soothe his feelings, and wrote to him expressing regret at the unfortunate turn of events for which neither he nor de la Haye was responsible. Sher Khan replied simply that he did not mind it at all, except that it had put him in the bad grace of his master, the Generalissimo of the Bijapur army. Martin wrote to St. Thomé also about the matter.[1]

Early in June Martin had an interview with Sher Khan at Cuddalore. His reception was markedly cool, the effect of the increasing pressure of the Dutch and of the refusal of payment at Surat. News also reached Martin about the arrival of Rijcklof with 13 Dutch ships at Negapatam, and there was a strong rumour that the combined forces of the Dutch and of the ruler of Jinji would come to attack the French at Pondicherry. But nothing happened. In the same month there occurred another setback to the French cause, when through the instigation and threats of the Golconda general all the Frenchmen at Madras were driven

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 618-19.

out by the English.[1] They all come to join Martin at Pondicherry, the only place on the Coromandel coast where the French had yet a shelter.

The ring was gradually closing in upon St. Thomé. Through the months of July and August de la Haye wrote frantic letters to Martin to send immediate relief, but it became almost impossible to send letters even, not to speak of provisions. All hopes of gaining help from some of the Indian Princes on the Coromandel coast faded away, and even Sher Khan, the only friend, grew increasingly cold towards the French. Chevreuil reached Pondicherry on the 13th August, but it was not till the beginning of September that he agreed to hand over the money to Martin, after raising many difficulties at first for which he got a sharp letter from de la Haye. On the 7th September Martin, Chevreuil and Antonio Cattel went to see Sher Khan at Valikandapuram. Chevreuil gave him a bill of exchange drawn upon the Golconda merchant to whom he had handed over the money. But Sher Khan would not make any move at all till he had the cash actually in his hands.[2] It was now too late. Things were moving fast and on the 17th news reached Pondicherry about the capitulation of St. Thomé. Both de la Haye and Baron wrote to Martin to send back all the Frenchmen at Pondicherry, including Chevreuil, on board a ship to

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 631. For the English version see *Records of Fort St. George—Diary and Consultation Book* (1672-78), pp. 22-24 (Consultation, dated 31st May (O.S.), 1674). The English had no option in the matter of giving shelter to the Frenchmen, but were compelled by the Golconda General to expel them. As they showed some hesitation at first, the Golconda forces even laid siege to Madras on the 23rd May (O.S.), and fearing worse consequences the English passed orders on the Frenchmen to leave Madras.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 662-63.

be supplied by the Dutch. Chevreuil, realising the sort of reception he would get from de la Haye who would surely hold him responsible for the loss of St. Thomé, fled away and hid himself for a few days at Vilnoor within the jurisdiction of the ruler of Jinji. In spite of the best efforts of Martin, he could not be persuaded to come back. On the 20th all the Frenchmen embarked for St. Thomé on board a Dutch ship, and only Martin with six others remained at Pondicherry. Chevreuil came back on the 23rd after the ship had left. Sher Khan wrote to Martin expressing his deep sorrow at the news of the loss of St. Thomé, and assuring him of the continuation of his friendship towards the French.[1]

Thus ended the story of the mission on which Martin had come from St. Thomé to Pondicherry. One cannot praise too highly the supreme efforts which he and de l'Espinay made for the relief of St. Thomé, but all their efforts were powerless against an unexpected combination of adverse circumstances. The tragedy rolled on and reached its inevitable and gloomy end. But history must record the devotion and loyalty with which Martin and de l'Espinay played their parts.

### 3. *St. Thomé—from January to September, 1674*

Let us now turn to the situation at St. Thomé where the pressure of the siege was at last making itself felt. It has already been seen that de la Haye had decided to send out all useless persons in order to preserve the existing food-stock to last for a longer time. Most of the Indian troops were dismissed. They went out in small groups at their own risk; some of them took

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. pp. 665-66.

service with the Dutch and some were enlisted by the English at Madras; 150 persons were sent to Pondicherry with Martin. There still remained a large number, women and children, to be transferred safely to some other place. On the 4th January de la Haye sent back two captured Dutch soldiers with a letter to Pavillon, requesting him to grant a free passage to Madras to the women and children at St. Thomé, which was readily granted.[1] It is curious to note that although the Dutch were more bitterly hostile to the French than the king of Golconda, more courtesies were exchanged between the two European nations than between the French and the Golconda army.

Desertion among the French was multiplying at a surprising rate, and through all the months down to the capitulation of St. Thomé one of the greatest preoccupations of de la Haye was how to keep his troops loyal and contented. The disease had spread even among the officers, which made the task of de la Haye infinitely more difficult. He tried several methods to retain the loyalty of his soldiers and sailors, but all to no purpose. He harangued them on many an occasion about the greatness of the king they had the privilege to serve, about the fame and honour they had already acquired in India by the brilliance of their arms, and about the eternal glory to themselves and to their nation which the ultimate victory would bring them. The appeal to their sentiments fell on deaf ears. He adopted gentleness and force alternately, but both proved equally useless. Demoralisation had set in in an appalling manner. The disease had spread almost beyond cure, and it became increasingly clear as months passed that the final end could only be postponed by some tem-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 560.

porary remedies, but could not be ultimately averted. In spite of all that their brave and tenacious general could do, the soldiers and sailors went on clamouring about the cutting down of their food rations and the failure to pay their salaries. Even the officers, who should have known better, joined the malcontents and kept up the clamour.

On the 13th February the dissatisfied troops assembled at the parade ground and complained loudly about the new food ration, and a few days later de la Haye received an unsigned letter that if the ration was not increased, a large number of soldiers would desert by the end of the month. It was, in fact, a hopeless situation. Some relief was obtained by a dashing adventure on the night of the 19th, when de la Haye started out at the head of 300 men to a village south of St. Thomé. The crops stood ripe for cutting down. The French reaped as much as possible and returned to St. Thomé with 160 bags full of rice.[1]

Of the three Dutch ships before Triplicane one sailed away to the south, and the other two anchored nearer *Le Breton*, the only remaining ship of the French. Fearing that the Dutch intended to attack *Le Breton*, the latter was immediately put ready for action, but the Dutch ships always kept themselves at a respectful distance. De la Haye wrote to Deltor at Madras to know about the disposition of the Dutch and Golconda forces and also to Destremeau, the French physician at the Court of Golconda, to make every possible effort to bring about an honourable peace. With Martin at Pondicherry he was in regular correspondence, and urged him in every letter to send food-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 571-72.

stuffs immediately through negotiation, force or any other means.

On the 2nd March the French made a very lucky capture of a boat carrying 23 bales of painted cloth and 200 bags of rice. The boat was coming from the north and proceeding towards the Dutch ships, when she was intercepted by two of *Le Breton's* boats and brought to St. Thomé within full view of the Dutch. Upon interrogation the sailors of the captured boat declared that they were going to Cuddalore from where the cargo would be sent to Bantam. The 23 bales of painted cloth were purchased at Pulicat at a very high price, and it is really surprising that the Dutch made no attempt at all to prevent the boat from falling into the hands of the French. The French undertook another dashing enterprise on the night of the 3rd, when upon a secret information that huge quantities of rice were stocked in a ware-house in a neighbouring village named Tilcherry, guarded by strong bodies of Golconda cavalry and infantry, they made a surprise raid, killed a large number of the guards who were all sleeping, and carried back to St. Thomé 200 bags of rice and 14 horses.[1]

De la Haye had been long trying to find out means to draw the Golconda or the Dutch forces to a decisive action in the open, but the latter had resisted all his attempts to draw them out of their strongly entrenched positions. On the 7th March de la Haye planned a wide trap for the enemies. Having posted some troops in the old Luz Church and a few other detachments scattered at different points, well under cover, with orders to de Maillé, the new Governor of St. Thomé, to

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 586-87. In the *Vestiges of Old Madras*, I, p. 330, the name of the village is given as Vellacherry.

support the detachments where necessary, he himself started at the head of only fifteen horsemen and pushed forward up to the Golconda camp. The Golconda army ashamed of being defied so near its own camp by such a small party immediately sent out two to three hundred horsemen, and the Dutch also sent out a body of infantry at the same time. De la Haye skilfully tried to draw them to the place where the French detachments lay hidden, but the ruse was detected and the enemies did not press forward. In order to provoke them beyond prudence, de la Haye again went forward towards the enemies, but this time he was suddenly surrounded by some Golconda horsemen, two of whom he killed on the spot, but a third one wounded him with a lance. By this time some of the French detachments had come upon the scene and the enemies quickly retired. With their general grievously wounded the French also returned to St. Thomé. For a few days de la Haye lay in a very critical condition to the deepest anxiety of the entire garrison; but he soon recovered and within ten days he was again fit for active work.[1]

On the 8th de la Haye wrote to the Golconda general proposing an exchange of prisoners, to which however the latter did not agree, in contrast with the Dutch, who had sometimes agreed to such exchanges.

In spite of all his frantic letters to Martin, de la Haye had not yet received any relief from Pondicherry. He at last decided in desperation to run the risk of sending *Le Breton*, the only remaining French ship, to Pondicherry to bring immediate relief. It was a tremendous risk, but there was no other alternative. On the 10th March *Le Breton* slipped away from St. Thomé two hours before daybreak taking advantage of a favourable wind. The two Dutch vessels lying at

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 589-90.

anchor before Triplicane went in pursuit sometime later, and in the afternoon brought her to action. The naval combat went on for several hours in which the French acquitted themselves splendidly well, but they were at a great disadvantage, as the Dutch ships had greater speed and could manœuvre with more ease and freedom. On the other hand the Dutch showed great lack of vigour and determination. They remained content by merely firing from a long distance and made no attempt to come closer and board the French ship. At last the wind having changed its course, making it impossible to gain Pondicherry, *Le Breton* returned to St. Thomé in the evening, followed by the two Dutch vessels which again anchored before Triplicane.[1]

The action was glorious for the captain of *Le Breton*, Chevalier de Maisonneuve, but the fear of more naval engagements in future led to the desertion of 15 sailors soon after their return to St. Thomé. It compelled de la Haye to make a declaration that the manning of the ship would be based on voluntary service and no compulsion would be put on anybody. The apprehension of the sailors arose from the fact that a large number of guns had been transferred from the walls of the town to the ship. The general impression was that de la Haye intended to attack the Dutch ships. But the real reason was that he was preparing for the worst eventuality, in case of a complete exhaustion of the food-stock, to blow up the town and to sail away on board *Le Breton*, carrying off as many guns and as much munitions as possible.[2]

De la Haye quickly recovered from his wound and rode out on the 17th. It had become necessary for him

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 591-92.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 595.

to come out, in order to restore confidence among his men, as the Dutch had circulated a news that he was dead.

The eagerly awaited relief from outside reached St. Thomé in the latter part of March. There arrived three boats, richly loaded with food-stuffs, which had started from Cuddalore for the south and had been captured by the French at Porto Novo. The boats were quickly unloaded and the food-stuffs stored in the warehouse. De la Haye took great care to provide against theft and malversation, but even the strictest measures proved fruitless, and large quantities of food-stuffs were stealthily removed.

Nothing of importance happened in April. The Dutch spread the rumour that they would soon carry out an escalade, for which they prepared a number of ladders, and the Golconda forces gave the impression of receiving strong reinforcements by showing processions of lights coming from the interior and proceeding towards their camp. Both the things were however probably ruses meant to intimidate the French. At St. Thomé desertions went on increasing in spite of the best endeavours of de la Haye to retain the loyalty of his men. The French made reconnoitring excursions almost daily, and there were some minor skirmishes with stray enemy detachments. De la Haye once thought of a very daring plan, to embark on *Le Breton*, to attack the two Dutch ships watching her, and then to push on to Pondicherry, from where to come back to St. Thomé with food-stuffs and munitions. But the prospects of success were so little and the risks involved so great that de la Haye had ultimately to give up the idea.

The ship *Le Breton*, although not much helpful in fighting against the Dutch fleet, did very useful

work in protecting the small boats in the roadstead of St. Thomé which had been captured by the French. But through a severe misfortune this ship also was lost. On the 1st May there was a furious gale spreading from the Bay of Bengal to the Red sea. *Le Breton* was at anchor; her masts were broken and her sails torn away, and at last she was driven ashore and completely wrecked a short distance to the south of St. Thomé. The debris of the wrecked ship were collected and brought to the town. Some dead bodies were washed ashore near Madras, and the English Governor pretending to recognise among them the body of Chevalier de Maisonneuve, the captain of *Le Breton*, buried it with full military honours.[1] It was a stroke of diplomacy on the part of the Governor of Madras. The most amusing thing was that Chevalier de Maisonneuve, who was not on board the ship at the time of the gale, wrote to the English Governor later, thanking him for his courtesy. The Dutch also lost their two ships anchored before Triplicane, but in spite of that they made great rejoicings at the loss to the French of their only remaining ship.[2] The French were now completely cut off from the outside world, and their surrender seemed only a matter of time.

There was nothing else of importance in May. De la Haye went on writing frantic letters to Martin to send immediate help. He seems to have little realised the difficulties facing Martin and de l'Espinay, and was rather inclined to hold them responsible for their failure to send relief. Skirmishes and minor engagements with the enemies went on as before, and desertions continued daily almost on a regular scale. Some of the

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. pp. 619-21.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 615-16.

officers showed a deplorable indiscreetness in expressing their views about the prospects of receiving help from outside, which had the only effect of further undermining the morale of their men.[1] On the 13th June the Dutch summoned the French to surrender, to which the latter replied with four cannon shots, indicating their determination to fight on till the last.[2] But the situation at St. Thomé was steadily deteriorating and nothing could prevent the increasing rate of desertion. De la Haye harangued the soldiers almost daily about their supreme duties and responsibilities, and even expressed his readiness to open the door to those who had the intention of deserting. But all these appeals were in vain. Even some of the officers who had been given watching duties on the walls and bastions to prevent desertions took advantage of their positions and went over to the enemy camp.

A strong Dutch fleet arrived before St. Thomé on the 21st July. The fleet received some additions later on, but nothing could be done against the formidable defences of St. Thomé. So after a number of conferences both on board the flagship and at Triplicane, thirteen of the vessels sailed for the south at the beginning of August, leaving only four before St. Thomé.

De la Haye had planned as a desperate stroke an attack on the Golconda camp on the 12th August. He had entrusted his Major, Danval, to distribute arms and ammunitions and make all necessary preparations. But when everything seemed ready, news was brought to de la Haye that Danval had deserted with two other high officers, Lecouvreur and Libertas. Nothing could have caused greater surprise than the desertion of

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I. p. 624.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 634.

these three prominent officers who had been all along in the confidence of de la Haye and had a full and detailed knowledge about the state of affairs at St. Thomé. It was suspected that they were afraid of the encounter with the Golconda forces as planned by de la Haye.[1] To the brave and indomitable French general it was the rudest shock he had ever received, and with a sigh of grief and despair he gave up his plan of raiding the Golconda camp.

De la Haye had resorted to every possible means to retain the loyalty of his men, threats, persuasions and appeals to their sentiments and he even stooped low to false tricks. To counteract the general impression among the soldiers that the existing food stocks would not last for more than four days he invited some of them to examine the stocks in the warehouse, which were found sufficient to last for three months at least. But the soldiers did not realise that beneath the rice shown to them there was sand very artfully concealed. The trick pacified discontent for a time, but the morale of the garrison had become so completely shaken that desertions still continued.

The French had been so effectively cut off from the outside world that they could not even send messengers to Pondicherry, all the roads having been completely closed by the enemies. De la Haye made a last attempt to gain help from Sher Khan Lody, and in order to give his messenger a safe passage to Pondicherry he decided to create a diversion for the enemies by a surprise night raid on the 27th August. With a small but picked force he started out at night, crossed the river lying between St. Thomé and the Golconda camp and suddenly fell upon the advance enemy posts. The

1. *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, 1, pp. 654-55.

Golconda forces took up their position behind entrenchments extending from the river down to their camp dotted with a number of redoubts. But the fierce charge of the French drove them back from one redoubt to another, and it seemed that the way lay clear for an attack on the Golconda camp itself. But de la Haye did not think it wise to advance further with his small force, and he therefore returned to St. Thomé after having given a bad mauling to the enemies.[1]

The ease with which he had driven back the Golconda forces showed de la Haye clearly how weak they really were. He assembled the garrison on the morning of the 27th (August), explained the whole situation and asked his men to have patience and give him just eight days more. He then proposed to deliver a surprise attack on the Golconda camp and left them to think about the matter for the whole day. When they reassembled in the evening de la Haye asked them what they had decided. The courage and tenacity of their general set an example and provided an inspiration to all his men, and they replied in one voice that they were ready to go against the enemies. But when all preparations had been made and the gates of the town were going to be opened for the sortie, news came to de la Haye that some officers and men had just deserted and that a large number of others were ready to follow unless they could be prevented by some immediate action. At once there broke out great panic and confusion among the men and the raid on the Golconda camp had to be abandoned. De la Haye with his principal officers immediately went to the walls to prevent desertion and spent the whole night there in making rounds and restoring confidence and order

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 658-59.

among his men.[1] The situation had taken a sudden turn which revealed clearly how completely the morale of the French had broken down. It was now impossible to hold out any longer, and the only thing that could be done was to open negotiations with the enemies.

### 4. *Capitulation decided upon*

On the 30th (August) de la Haye assembled all the officers and laid before them the whole situation. He told them about the bad conduct of Chevreuil whose failure to obey orders and pay money immediately had lost for the French all hopes of getting relief from outside, the scanty food stocks in the town which could not last for more than eight days, and the panic and confusion among the garrison. Finally, he asked them to tell him what they thought best under the circumstances, and with one voice they replied that negotiations should at once be opened with the Dutch. De la Haye accepted their unanimous opinion and wrote to the Dutch commander, Pavillon, at Triplicane, requesting him to send a responsible officer to open talks. De la Haye did not like to give any knowledge of the negotiations to the Golconda general, as he preferred to treat with a Christian and European nation rather than with an Eastern and Muhammedan Power. The latter was not bound by the rules of International Law which had gradually developed in Europe, and there was no guarantee that it would keep faith, so at least the French thought. Moreover, negotiating with the Dutch alone, it was possible to get better terms than negotiating with both the enemies. Finally, the French wanted to return to Europe, and it was not

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 660-61.

possible to do so unless the Dutch lent them some of their ships, which made it absolutely necessary to negotiate with them.

Thibaudeau, a surgeon in the service of the French Company, was entrusted with delivering de la Haye's letter in secret to the Dutch commander. He was very well received and sent back with a favourable reply. On the 31st afternoon Pavillon sent Tacq, an Infantry captain, to St. Thomé, and after a conference of half an hour with de la Haye he went back to his own camp.[1] Tacq returned to St. Thomé on the 1st September and had a second conference with de la Haye for two hours. It was decided to exchange hostages, two from each side, as a pledge that negotiations would be carried on in all sincerity and good faith. The preliminaries were completed on the 2nd, and on the 3rd after long discussions the articles of capitulation were drawn up. Messengers passed from one camp to the other on the 4th with suggestions for modifications or alterations of the terms thought necessary by either party, and on the 5th full agreement was reached. Two fair copies of the treaty were made, one in French and the other in Dutch. On the 6th de la Haye assembled all his officers, read out to them the articles of capitulation and asked them for their opinion. All of them agreed that the terms were very advantageous, considering the plight in which they were, there not being sufficient provisions even for a single day. The treaty was then signed and solemn declarations made by de la Haye at St. Thomé and Pavillon at Triplicane to abide by the terms.[2]

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*. I. pp. 661-62.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 667.

## 5. *Terms of Capitulation*

It would be interesting to notice here the final articles of capitulation to see how advantageous were the terms that the French got.

Articles for the surrender of the town of St. Thomé [1] :—

1. To surrender the town without destroying anything and with all the guns and munitions of war within fifteen days.
2. To go out with arms and baggages, drums beating, colours flying, torches lighted at both ends and two 6-pounders at the head of the troops, and to embark.
3. The Dutch will supply two ships fit to make the voyage to France, with provisions for eight months and thirty pieces of artillery with proper ammunitions, exclusive of our (French) two pieces with their ammunitions.
4. The Dutch Company will furnish two ships in good condition and with provisions on condition of (the French) paying for the said provisions and returning the two ships to the Company in Holland.
5. That the two ships will start from St. Thome within fifteen days and will not touch at any place where the Dutch have settlements, that is to say that they will not go to places where the Dutch are the masters, particularly Mauritius.
6. That we (the French) shall not put any obstacles in the way of the Dutch ships, nor create any difficulty in the places belonging to them, and that they will give us passport up to France so as not to put any obstacle in our way from here to there.
7. That from the day of the signature of the articles of agreement there will not be any act of hostility on either side and that we (the French) shall not go out of the town further than a distance of one and a half musket range, and that the Dutch and the Moors (Golconda forces) will not approach the town nearer than these limits.
8. That from the day of the treaty there will be supplied to eight hundred men a pound and a half of rice per head per day with three cows and fifteen kids which will be carried daily to St. Thome.

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, pp. 668-69.

9. If there should come any considerable help by sea or otherwise, the French garrison will not be able to render any aid but must remain inactive as much by sea as by land; and even when there should come provisions by sea or by land only for two months the treaty will have effect, but if for more than two months it will not have effect.
10. That all the inhabitants of the town, Portuguese and others, will be able to retire where they like within fifteen days.
11. That the prisoners who have been taken during the siege will be given back on both sides from the day of the signature of the present treaty.
12. The Director General, Baron, will have the option to embark, for going to Surat, on board one of the Dutch ships, where he will be treated with honour; if he does not like it, he will be able to go with all his men by land, (and) will be supplied with a passport by the Dutch and the Moors (Golconda Generals).
13. That when the troops will go out of St. Thome to embark, there will be sent, two men by the Dutch who will receive the keys from the Major of the town, and till the time that we (the French) go out there will be two men as hostages on both sides from the day of the signature.
14. That if the Dutch wish to give a convoy, it will be left to their will, but that they will not be able to prevent our straight route to France, nor put anybody on their side on the two ships without the consent of the French.
15. That all the articles of the present treaty will be observed on both sides without any fraud or deceit, and although there be some errors in writing or some other mistake, it is desired unanimously that the whole be executed in good faith and right intention.

*Signed at St. Thomé on the 6th September, 1674*

A comparison between this treaty and the one concluded at Trinkomali will show clearly how easy were the terms which the French got at St. Thomé. By the earlier treaty the men of the French garrison were taken prisoners and sent to Batavia, and although there was a promise that they would be sent back to Europe at the earliest opportunity, that promise was never kept and could not be enforced. Most of the men rotted in the

prisons of Batavia, and only a few could escape. Whereas under the present treaty the French were given two ships in full control with necessary defensive armaments and provisions for their return voyage to Europe. The Dutch bound themselves not to put any obstacles in the way of the French returning to their country. Although the prolonged siege had cost the French a large number of men, the remnants of the army were saved and safely taken back to France, there to be employed in other theatres of war. Except for the loss of St. Thomé the French hardly suffered any material loss to their strength as it was on the day of the signature of the treaty. Secondly, while at Trinkomali the Ceylonese who had helped the French were left entirely at the mercy of the Dutch, at St. Thomé the treaty had secured for the Indian troops, who had helped the French, full liberty to go wherever they liked within a stated period. Thirdly, the treaty did not put any kind of humiliation upon the French who were allowed to go out with full military honours. Lastly, for the period of fifteen days, from the signature of the treaty to the embarkation of the French, the Dutch bound themselves to supply provisions to eight hundred men of the garrison. It is really surprising how the French could get so advantageous terms, considering the extremely critical situation in which they really were. On the day of the signature of the treaty they had not provisions even for a single day, and on that very day the garrison was saved from starvation by the Dutch sending 1200 pounds of rice and three cows, as stipulated in the treaty.[1] The morale of the garrison had broken down completely, and the French were literally at the end of their resources. They would have been compelled to sue for peace on any

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 667.

terms. With not a single ship of their once mighty squadron in the port, with the besieging forces increasing their pressure day by day and cutting them off effectively from all contact with the outside world, and with no prospect whatsoever of getting any immediate relief, the French had no other alternative but to treat and to accept any terms that the victorious enemies might impose on them. The easy terms that the French got show clearly that the Dutch, in spite of all the information they could get from the French deserters, did not realise the full extent of the critical situation at St. Thomé. They had been so much impressed by the heroic and stubborn defence of St. Thomé for such a long period that they were quite willing to accept the terms of the French just to end the weary war. The treaty was really the reward for the valour and wonderful resistance of the French for twenty six months. Although in the end completely worn down and on the verge of a collapse, they were spared the humiliation of a defeat. Under the circumstances it was the best tribute to the sheer brilliance of their arms. Defeated the French were, but even in the midst of defeat they had dictated the terms of peace. It was a defeat without any sting, without any humiliation.

### 6. *Execution of the Treaty*

On the 10th September de la Haye wrote to the Dutch commander, Pavillon, that although the treaty had stipulated for an exchange of prisoners between the French and the Dutch only, he would request him to exert his influence to effect the release of the men who had fallen into the hands of the Golconda army. He argued that it would be only fair and just that all the

Frenchmen taken prisoners in the war should be released after the surrender of St. Thomé, and moreover it would be an act of charity on the part of the Dutch to effect the release of Christians from the hands of Muhammedans. Pavillon promised in reply that he would try his very best in the matter.[1]

The Golconda general was highly indignant that the Dutch had carried off all the honours of the capitulation. He decided to play a trick upon the Dutch and spoke about it to a Frenchman at Madras, who communicated it to de la Haye, but the latter would have nothing to do with it. On the 19th there arrived from the Golconda camp a letter and presents for de la Haye from the king, who offered the French general very advantageous terms if he entered his service, but he treated the proposal with the greatest contempt.[2] It cannot be said definitely whether de la Haye did the right thing or not. If he had accepted the proposal he might have established a dominant French influence in Golconda in an indirect way, an opportunity which his successors about a century later would have eagerly seized upon. But as yet France was not thinking of creating a political and military influence in India through this indirect method. The days of military adventurers in the service of the Indian Princes were yet to come.

According to the terms of the treaty the Dutch put two of their ships at the disposal of the French, the *Rammekin* and the *Welze*. Chevalier de Maisonneuve was appointed captain of the former and de Manivilliers of the latter. After all the preparations had been completed de la Haye handed over the town to

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 670.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 671-72.

the Dutch on the 23rd and then embarked on board the ship *Welze*. The ships set sail from St. Thomé on the 24th (September, 1674).

Although technically the story of the naval expedition ends with the departure of the French from St. Thomé on the 24th September, 1674, de la Haye had occupied so much of the story and had dominated it to such an extent that it would be only fitting and proper to follow his career a little more down to his death a few years later. After a most unhappy voyage de la Haye's ship, the *Welze*, arrived at Port Louis on the 6th March, 1675,[1] and the other ship, the *Rammekin*, arrived at La Rochelle. Immediately upon his arrival de la Haye fell seriously ill, and for sometime his condition was very critical. After recovering from the illness de la Haye went to Paris with his officers, and then to Flanders where the king was on campaign. The king received de la Haye in the most generous and honourable way, and gave employment to all his officers either in the army or in the navy as they desired. In the next year de la Haye, serving in his capacity of Lieutenant-General, was appointed Commander of Thionville, and after a glorious record of service he died in action in 1677.

## 7. *Retrospect*

That is the end of the French naval expedition on which so much hopes had been pinned. Caron had formed wide projects in his mind about the establishment of the French in the East on the most secure foot-

1 Castonnet des Fosses—*L'Inde Francaise avant Dupleix*, p. 110. According to Martin it was May; see his *Mémoires*, I, p. 674. Martin's dates and figures are usually quite correct.

ing. Colbert had wide visions about an economic sphere of influence, if not political, built on the ruins of the Dutch. France had put an implicit confidence in the formidable naval squadron under de la Haye which she had sent to the Eastern waters. The king, the all-powerful minister, and the whole country had seen in the expedition only brilliant prospects of success. In Europe France was occupying a position of supremacy as yet unquestioned and undisputed. Under the influence of the vigorous policy of Louis XIV and the far-sighted statesmanship of Colbert she had stretched forth her hand for maritime and colonial supremacy; and who was there to dispute with her the prize of Eastern trade and colonisation? Europe had been dazzled by the brilliance, the might and the greatness of France, and it was unthinkable that any of her petty neighbours would have the hardihood to oppose her bid for trade and influence in the East. The task before the naval squadron under de la Haye seemed so easy. It would be necessary only to make some impressive displays and everything would go well. Such a mighty squadron under such a brilliant Commander had never been seen in Indian waters before, and it seemed that its mere appearance would smoothen all difficulties for the French. That was in 1670. Five years later only a small remnant of the once formidable expeditionary force returned to Europe totally dispirited and discredited. The mighty squadron had disappeared, not a single ship survived, although no great naval action had been fought, and the French had to return to Europe on board two Dutch ships. Money, resources and energies had been frittered away in the most thoughtless manner, and nothing had been achieved either on the Malabar coast, in Ceylon, on the coast of Coromandel or in the

Spice Islands. History offers few parallels to such glorious promises ending so disastrously. And yet in the present case the disaster was neither sudden nor surprising. Anybody who has followed the course of the expedition as described in the preceding pages must admit that there could have been no other result.

Taking a look back we can clearly see that the failure of the French was nothing of an accident but can be attributed to some definite factors,—the loss of valuable time and opportunities, the spirit of insubordination and dissatisfaction among all ranks, the chronic discord among the chiefs of the French Company in India, the instructions of de la Haye to submit to the views of the Company's Directors in India in all matters even when he knew that they were in the wrong, the strange policy of Caron which might reasonably lead him to be suspected of treachery, the timid and vacillating attitude of the French at Trinkomali, the thoughtless capture of St. Thomé without any plan and without considering the difficulties which it might lead to, the blunder of the Masulipatam enterprise, the lack of tact and sense of realities which led to the failure of the negotiations with the Court of Golconda when success was almost in sight, the conduct of Chevreuil which lost for the French all chances of getting any help from outside, and lastly some accidents, like the capture by Malabar corsairs of some important letters from France which had been sent to inform de la Haye about the certainty of an outbreak of war in Europe.

But the most important factor for the failure of the enterprise was the neglect of the French Government. Colbert and Louis XIV had been full of enthusiasm at the time of sending out the squadron. But their interest soon diminished, and the outbreak of

war in Europe in 1672 turned their attention away from India. The vision of creating an Eastern colonial empire faded away as Louis XIV entered on an aggressive war in Europe for supremacy on the Continent. It is a pity that France never realised the importance of naval power and overseas colonisation. From time to time during the periodic intervals of peace and quiet she made some attempts to strengthen her navy and build up a colonial empire, but these attempts were always sacrificed to her Continental ambitions. It was only towards the end of the nineteenth century, when she realised the absolute impossibility of further aggrandisement in Europe, that she diverted her attention to building up a colonial empire in Africa and in the Far East. During the period covered in this book, if Louis XIV had included the East as an important theatre of operations against the Dutch, the fate of the naval expedition under de la Haye might have been different. It is not difficult to imagine what a great change in the situation would have been brought about by some re-inforcements from France during the critical days of the second siege of St. Thomé. Re-inforcements of even a few ships, and some men and money at that stage would have helped the French not only materially but also psychologically, by strengthening the morale of the men, who would not have considered themselves as having been left to their fate by the Home Government. But no re-inforcements ever came during the whole course of the siege, and the ultimate fall of St. Thomé was, to a very large extent, due to the callous and almost cruel neglect on the part of the French Government of an enterprise which had been started with so high hopes and enthusiasm.

# CHAPTER XI

## Foundation of Pondicherry

1. Political ideas of Baron. 2. Negotiations about the cession of St. Thomé. 3. Baron at Pondicherry. 4. Early history of Pondicherry. 5. Beginnings of the French connection with Pondicherry. 6. Martin at Pondicherry. 7. First step in the policy of intervention.

### *1. Political ideas of Baron*

In spite of all their tenacity and heroic efforts the French could not hold on to St. Thomé in the face of such tremendously heavy odds. They had to surrender the town to the Dutch, and de la Haye returned to France a thoroughly disappointed man, having lost his squadron and the major part of his men without any tangible achievement to his credit. But although the failure at St. Thomé was undoubtedly a grievous blow to the French, it did not mean the end of all hopes. The French were determined to cling on to the Coromandel coast, facing all hardships and difficulties, till new opportunities arose to establish themselves more securely on the eastern coast. While in September, 1674, everything seemed to be lost, there were fortunately for the French two persons who had great imagination and political fore-sight, Baron and Martin. Baron refused to admit the loss of St. Thomé as a permanent defeat, and was determined, by negotiations or war, to see the French established at some convenient place on the coast, preferably St. Thomé. He had a clear perception of the political situation in the country and the role which the French might play, almost as clear as Dupleix about eighty years later. The

numerous letters he wrote to the king, Colbert and the authorities of the Company in France reveal quite clearly his views on the Indian political situation and the policy he wanted his countrymen to follow. He realised that the stable governments in India, particularly in the south, were all breaking up, ushering in a long period of continuous struggle, disorder and confusion. In that atmosphere of change and revolution, the French could easily make themselves the arbiters of the fate of the Indian princes, provided they had two secure establishments in India, one on the Malabar and another on the Coromandel coast, and a few ships, men and munitions were sent every year from France to reinforce them. The Indian states in the south, distracted by continual internal revolutions and the ever-shifting alliances among princes and rulers, would be compelled to turn to the French for help and protection, which would make the latter the real controlling authority in the country. It would be wrong to suppose, of course, that Baron had any intention of building up a French empire in India. He was mainly concerned with trade and commerce, but at the same time he realised that in the changing situation in the country even the interests of trade and commerce demanded a secure territorial establishment, where the French might fortify themselves and whose revenues would be sufficient not merely to maintain the garrison but also to take appropriate diplomatic and, when necessary, military measures while intervening in Indian politics to their advantage.

Immediately after the capitulation of St. Thomé Baron wrote to the authorities of the Company in France, " it is of the greatest importance for the good of your commerce that this place should remain under

the king or the Company. I beg you to employ yourselves seriously for that object.....and I ask you the favour of remembering St. Thomé in case peace had not yet been made with the Dutch."[1] In December, 1674, he wrote to de la Haye, " what would not have the name of our great and invincible monarch achieved in India if St. Thomé had remained to him, because with the least help that might have come from Europe His Majesty would have been the arbiter of the Moorish (Muslim) and Gentile (Hindu) Princes."[2] Early in 1675 he wrote letters to Louis XIV and Colbert, stressing the importance of having a secure territorial establishment on the Coromandel coast even at the cost of some money.

In the treaty for the surrender of St. Thomé there was a provision (art. 12) that Baron might go to Surat either by a Dutch ship or by the overland route, for which he would be given the necessary passport by the king of Golconda. There was also an understanding, though not entered in the formal treaty, that Baron might go to Surat on board the French frigate, *La Diligente*, which had been beached at Porto Novo. Baron chose the second alternative as he did not like to take any help from the Dutch. On the same day that de la Haye left St. Thomé Baron also retired to Madras, with a number of merchants and clerks of the Company, 20 soldiers and 30 sailors. From there he wrote to Martin at Pondicherry to make immediate arrangements to put *La Diligente* to sea again and to send it to Madras.[3] Veron, the captain of *La Diligente*, who was at Pondicherry at the time was sent at once to Porto Novo to make the necessary repairs, but it was

1 Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, p. 148.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 150.
3 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 1.

a slow and difficult work, and it was not till the 22nd November, 1674, that the vessel could be put to sea.[1]

St. Thomé was surrendered to the Dutch, but according to the treaty of alliance between the Dutch and the king of Golconda the place was to be handed over to the latter after an equal division between the two parties of all the guns, munitions and other things to be found there. Chinapelli Mirza, the Golconda general, entered the town on the 24th September, and after the division of spoils as stipulated in the treaty he took possession of the town in the name of his master on the 7th October. Apart from the treaty stipulation, the Dutch were not anxious to keep St. Thomé to themselves much longer, fearing that if the place remained in their possession till the conclusion of peace in Europe they might be required to hand it back to the French.

### 2. *Negotiations about the cession of St. Thomé*

The delay in repairing and putting to sea the frigate, *La Diligente*, prolonged the stay of Baron at Madras much beyond his original plan, and during this forced detention there arose unexpectedly an opportunity for the French to re-acquire the lost town of St. Thomé, this time not by force but by negotiations or rather purchase. Early in October Nicolas Correa, one of the principal merchants of St. Thomé, came to Madras to propose to Baron the opening of negotiations with Chinapelli Mirza for the cession of St. Thomé to the French, for which, as he said, the Golconda general was quite ready. The thing was that the Dutch had surrendered the town to the Golconda

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 3.

forces on condition that its fortifications would be completely destroyed, which by rendering it valueless and indefensible from the military point of view would prevent the return of the French. But the Golconda general, who had some personal grievances against the Dutch, thought it better for his own interest as well as that of his master to start negotiations with the French for the cession of the town to them in exchange for money. At first Baron received these overtures rather coldly, but two months later, on the 17th December, Chinapelli Mirza sent Nicolas Correa to him with a formal and written proposal.[1] This led to a prolonged correspondence between the two, each side trying to bargain as hard as possible. In the end things were arranged thus. The Golconda general would engage himself to secure a cession of the town to the French in the same condition in which it was at the time and to return the guns and munitions which had fallen to the share of the king of Golconda. He would secure a *farman* from the king in very wide and comprehensive terms for the French occupation of the place, which was to include several villages originally belonging to it. Complete peace would be established between France and Golconda, and the king of Golconda would send one of the nobles of his Court to France to solicit the friendship and alliance of the king of France. There were also a few conditions put forward by the French which were accepted by Chinapelli Mirza, namely, punishment to the Governor of Masulipatam for the murder of Malfosse, compensation for the pillage of the French settlement there, and a *farman* granting the liberty of trade and commerce throughout the kingdom. In exchange for these concessions the French were to pay 100,000

[1] Martin states that the intermediary was a Brahmin;—*Mémoires*, II, p. 7.

pagodas, the major portion going to the king of Golconda and the rest to Chinapeli Mirza and the intermediary.[1]

When the terms had been thus finally settled Baron held a council at Madras of all the principal Frenchmen and employees of the Company there were with him, and he even invited the Capuchin missionaries. He wrote to Martin also for his opinion. When Baron disclosed the terms of the proposed settlement before the council, all those present unanimously agreed that they were very satisfactory from the French point of view and should be accepted without hesitation. Even as a financial deal it would be highly profitable, as the value of St. Thomé in the condition in which it was at the time, of the guns and munitions which would be returned and the revenue to be expected from the territory ceded would far exceed the amount which the French would have to pay for the settlement. There were, to be sure, some who murmured about the loss of dignity arising from the purchase of a place with money which could have been defended by arms, and others who expressed some misgivings about the success of the negotiations on the ground that the Dutch, who had great influence at the Court of Golconda, would succeed in preventing such a settlement.[2] Ultimately, however, the terms were agreed to and signed by Baron and all those present and despatched to Chinapelli Mirza. The latter forwarded the terms to the Court, assuring Baron that he expected a satisfactory result despite the intrigues of the Dutch, and in case there was any hitch he would personally go to the Court to set matters right.

1 Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, p. 150. (The figure is put at 60,000 pagodas.)

2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II. pp. 7-8.

He had his personal motives too in this matter, not only the financial gain he would make from the deal but also the hope that his own brother would be selected for the embassy to Paris.[1]

The messenger whom Chinapelli Mirza sent to the Court returned on the 20th February, 1675, with an unfavourable reply, but the Golconda general assured Baron that he would go to the Court personally to settle matters as arranged with him previously. Upon this Baron left Madras by the frigate, *La Diligente*, and reached Pondicherry on the 22nd February.[2] He intended to remain there till the negotiations with Golconda were finally settled. But towards the end of the month there came the news that as Chinapelli Mirza was about to leave for the capital on the 27th, he received peremptory orders from the Court to return and stay on at St. Thomé. It was due to the machinations of the Dutch, who got wind of the negotiations started by the Golconda general and completely won over in their favour Madanna, the Brahmin minister who virtually ruled the state in the name of the indolent king. Chinapelli Mirza still held out hopes of success, which induced Baron to prolong his stay at Pondicherry to see the final outcome of the negotiations before leaving the Coromandel coast for Surat.

### 3. *Baron at Pondicherry*

There was another important reason which induced Baron to prolong his stay at Pondicherry. A man of great political fore-sight, he clearly realised the importance of establishing closer relations with Sher Khan

1 Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, p. 150.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 10.

Lody, who had been friendly towards the French throughout and who had offered the French their only shelter on the Coromandel coast. On the 28th February Sher Khan sent one of his cavalry captains to pay his compliments to Baron, who reciprocated them on the next day through Deltor. In March Sher Khan decided to meet the Governor of Jinji at Porto Novo in connection with some negotiations which had been going on between them for some time, and in order to give the impression that the French were his close allies Sher Khan wrote to Baron to send him some French troops to accompany him to Porto Novo. Baron accordingly sent him a French sergeant at the head of a small force consisting of 20 French and 50 Indian troops.[1]

Baron expressed a keen desire to meet Sher Khan, and the latter also was equally eager for an interview with the French Director. It was eventually settled that they should meet at Cuddalore on the 6th April. Baron started for that place in a palanquin, preceded by 20 guards under a commandant, and followed by five or six Frenchmen on horseback and about 100 Indian troops. The ceremonial journey was deliberately planned to impress upon Sher Khan the might and grandeur of the French nation. Sher Khan came out of Cuddalore to a distance of one league to welcome Baron. He also was accompanied by a grand retinue consisting of his eldest son and some other relatives, 4 to 5 hundred horsemen and 1,500 infantry troops. Sher Khan was seated on an elephant, and by the side was another elephant, fully decorated and meant for Baron. After the first customary civilities the whole party made a ceremonial entry into Cuddalore, where

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, pp. 10-11.

Baron and his men were lodged in a grand and newly constructed mansion. Baron remained there for three days, enjoying the lavish hospitality of his Muslim host. Presents were offered on both sides, but, as Martin observes, while the presents made by Baron were very expensive, those made by Sher Khan were more honourable than costly. However, Baron's short stay at Cuddalore was not wholly occupied with lavish entertainments and sumptuous dinners. He held important discussions with Sher Khan, which however could not be concluded in such a short time and were therefore left over for a later meeting between Martin and Sher Khan.[1] Martin does not state definitely the subject matter of these discussions, except that "there were laid plans for an enterprise which would have surely succeeded if the Court had desired to take a hand in it or rather if France had been then in a condition to send some troops and money to these parts."[2] But from Baron's letters to Colbert and de la Haye in December, 1675, it appears that the project formed during these discussions was about the conquest of Golconda by Sher Khan with the help of French money.[3] At the interview between Baron and Sher Khan the latter, referring to the negotiations about the cession of St. Thomé, declared that there was very little chance of these negotiations succeeding because of the opposition of the Dutch who had great influence at the Court of Golconda, and that it was also difficult for the French to reconquer the place by force, which would require the despatch of another large naval squadron entailing huge expenditure. He then put forward a rather startl-

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, pp. 15-16.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3 Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, pp. 153-54.

ing proposal. "If you think that your Emperor would pay for the maintenance of 5,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry for 8 or 10 months, I shall do my best to put you in possession of St. Thomé and other places that you may like on the Coromandel coast, and to give you the pleasure of seeing the kingdom of Golconda in the hands of one of your friends in less than 18 months."[1] Sher Khan declared that he would move Buhlul Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of Bijapur, about the enterprise, and he wanted 5 lakhs of pagodas and 100 French gunners for conquering the territories of the Nayaks of the south, whose revenues would permit him to undertake the conquest of Golconda. The proposal envisaged a vast and prolonged military enterprise, and it is difficult to say with certainty how far it was practicable and how far it would have succeeded if taken in hand in all seriousness. There were unmistakable signs of an impending break up of the southern states, which were in the most rotten and decadent condition. Times were opportune for an able military adventurer with a sufficiently strong army and adequate financial resources to embark on wide plans of conquest. But it is difficult to say how far Sher Khan was the strong man for that sort of military enterprise, even when supported by French money and French artillery. This much we know from later events that although Sher Khan obtained some victories over the Governor of Jinji and some other petty neighbours, before the furious onslought of the Marathas he proved a broken reed and could hardly put up any resistance at all. Baron, however, was so much impressed by Sher Khan that even after 8 months of careful calculations he wrote to Colbert and de la Haye expressing full confidence in the ability of Sher

1 Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, p. 153.

Khan and in the ultimate success of the projected military enterprise. He urged the French Government to send all possible help to Sher Khan, feeling sure that once seated on the Golconda throne with French help he would remain permanently under French control. Martin, however, being more realist, was sceptical about it, and thought that Sher Khan would look to his own interests only. But even he, as we have noticed before, was confident of the ability of Sher Khan.

Towards the end of April Baron received letters from Chinapelli Mirza in which the Golconda general expressed great regret for not having been able to go to the Court to finalise the negotiations but at the same time assured de la Haye that he would still press the matter and bring it to a successful issue.[1] By this time, however, Baron realised the difficulties that stood in the way of a satisfactory settlement and made up his mind to leave Pondicherry entrusting further negotiations to Martin, in whose diplomatic ability he had the fullest confidence. Moreover, he received news about more important and pressing matters at Surat which required his immediate presence there. In November, 1674, reports had reached Pondichery about great disorder in the Surat settlement due to the mismanagement of the two merchants, Adam and Pilavoine, in whose charge the settlement had been left after the departure of Baron and Gueston from that place. At the beginning of December Baron sent orders to Boureau, Chief of the Rajapur settlement, to pass on to Surat at once and take charge of the settlement there.[2] On the 22nd March, 1675, there arrived letters from Surat containing information that a packet

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 17.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

had been received from the *Chambre-Générale*, which, according to the instructions on the cover, was to be opened only in the presence of Baron, Martin and Bouteau.[1] That made it necessary for Baron to start for Surat at once, but for a time he hesitated and even asked Martin to go in his place as he did not like to leave the Coromandel coast till he had known the final outcome of the negotiations about St. Thomé. Ultimately, it was decided that he should go, leaving Martin to carry on the negotiations.[2] The frigate, *La Diligente*, had by this time become quite unseaworthy and it was accordingly beached. Sher Khan advised Baron to take the land route through Bijapur territory, and he even offered to give him letters of recommendation addressed to the governors of the places through which he would pass and an escort of 100 Rajput infantry and 40 cavalry troops.[3]

On the 5th May Baron started from Pondicherry with 10 Frenchmen and the escort given by Sher Khan. There remained at Pondicherry only Martin as the chief, Deltor as his second and more than 80 Frenchmen including the captain and crew of *La Diligente*. Baron's journey was of the most trying nature because of the heat of mid-summer and the excessive rains later which made the roads impassable, and but for the letters of recommendation given by Sher Khan it would have been impossible to carry on the journey. On reaching the Maratha frontier Baron sent back the escort given by Sher Khan and proceeded towards Rajapur, where he rested for some time before starting off again for Surat. At Rajapur Baron had an interview

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 12.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

with some of the ministers of Shivaji and conceived a project of an alliance between Shivaji, Buhlúl Khan, the Commander-in-Chief of Bijapur, and Sher Khan. In August, 1675, Martin received letters from Baron asking him to sound Sher Khan about the project, but the latter expressed strong suspicion about Shivaji's sincerity, and the matter was dropped there.[1] On the 3rd November Martin received letters from Surat informing him about the arrival of Baron and the opening of the packet from the Company, which contained a Royal order for the establishment of a *Conseil Souverain* at Surat, consisting of Baron as the President, and Jonchères, Martin, Boureau and Pilavoine as the councillors. Martin also received letters from the *Chambre-Générale* ordering him to go to Surat to take up the appointment, but he was directed by Baron to remain at Pondicherry, where his presence was more necessary in the interest of the Company.[2]

The future history of the Surat settlement lies outside the scope of the present volume, and let us now turn to Pondicherry and see how Martin was laying the foundation of a secure French establishment there.

### 4. *Early history of Pondicherry*

The early history of Pondicherry is very little known, except what can be gathered from scrappy references in stray sources. Even the original name of the place and its significance cannot be definitely ascertained. The place was mentioned under various names in the early references. It is named *Pollochire* in the account of a Dutch officer who visited the

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 22.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

place in 1618, and another one called it *Polofère*. Francis Day, the founder of Madras, stopped before the place in 1639 and called it *Poudouchery*. In 1654 Samson d'Abbéville, French Royal Geographer, mentioned the place in his work under the name *Puducheira*. In 1658 the Dutch author Gautier Schouten in his detailed description of the places on the Coromandel coast called it *Poule-Céré*.[1] By Indians also the place was variously named, *Philcheru*, *Phuljari* etc.[2] Although the place was thus variously named, from the time the French came there they called it *Pondichéry*, possibly from the earlier known name *Poudouchery* through an orthographical mistake. The place was first offered to the French by Sher Khan Lody in 1670, and although they could not accept it for lack of resources, for a long time they carried on regular correspondence with Sher Khan about the matter. According to J. Dubreuil the orthographical error which converted the name *Poudouchery* into *Pondichéry* arose in a quite natural way from the fact that during this period of negotiations, from 1670 to 1672, the French had been writing the name of a place which they had never heard pronounced.[3] Usually Indian place-names have some meaning which can help us with the clue to the original name of any particular place. But in the case of Pondicherry, even following this method we cannot come to any definite conclusion, because all the different versions of the name of the place bear some plausible meaning. If the original name was *Palli-cherri*, it meant the village (*cherri*) of the Pallavas (*Palli*). If

1 Labernadie—*Le Vieux Pondichéry*, p. 7; also Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, p. 103.

2 Malleson—*History of the French in India*, p. 23; quoting Browne's *Carnatic Chronology* and Elliott's *History of India*, Vol. VIII, p. 391.

3 Labernadie—*Le Vieux Pondichéry*, p. 9.

the name was *Poudoucheru*, it meant the new (*poudou* in Tamil) pond (*cheru* in Telegu). It would be certainly a hybrid combination of Tamil and Telegu words, but it cannot be considered as very uncommon or impossible. The kings of Vijaynagar who dug a great tank near the place belonged to the Telegu race. If the name was *Poudoucherri*, it meant new (*poudou*) village (*cherri*), and possibly the place was so called after the arrival of the Danes in the first quarter of the 17th century.[1] However, these facts do not give us any definite clue to the original name of the place.

Pondicherry had many natural advantages for trade and commerce. Its situation at the intersection of the road running down the eastern coast and the one going from Jinji towards the sea, and its proximity to nearly all the southern principalities gave it an importance enjoyed by few other places on the coast. Situated within the territory of Sher Khan Lody, " it was within a musket-shot of that of Jinji ; the Golconda territories were only six leagues away, and those of Ecugy, of the Nayak of Madura and of the Nayak of Mysore at a distance of 25 to 30 leagues."[2] The place was easy to defend, having natural obstacles on three sides against any surprise attack,—the river Ariancoupom on the south, marshes and sand dunes on the north, and the sea on the east, where the shallow roadstead prevented the close approach of men-of-war. On the west the red-hill which could be seen from ships from a long distance served as an important and useful landmark, and the mouth of the river Ariancoupom offered a secure shelter to the merchant vessels from the fury of the mon-

1 Labernadie—*Le Vieux Pondichéry*, p. 13.
2 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 5.

soon. The place had a large colony of fishermen who could be most conveniently utilised for the loading and unloading of ships. It was also well-known as an important centre of the manufacture of cotton fabrics. The climate of the place was healthy and agreeable.

About the beginning of the 17th century the Danes established themselves on the Coromandel coast, first at Tranquebar (about the year 1618) and later at Pondicherry. At Pondicherry they built up a very lucrative trade in cotton manufactures and constructed a large mansion which long survived their departure from the place and served as a useful shelter for European traders and travellers who happened to pass by that way. It is not known definitely when the Danes first came to Pondicherry or when they left the place. However, the departure of the Danes dealt a severe blow to the cotton manufacturing industry by practically stopping all export facilities, and the inhabitants of the place were naturally anxious to attract other European nations to serve as intermediaries for their export trade. Their successive rulers, first Hindu and then Muhammedan, made many overtures for the purpose in 1661 and 1664 to the Dutch, who had already established settlements not far from the place.

### 5. *Beginnings of the French connection with Pondicherry*

Although the actual establishment of the French at Pondicherry did not begin till February, 1673, when de l'Espinay arrived there, the beginnings of the French connection with the place may be dated much earlier, in August, 1670. It will be remembered that in 1669 Macara had obtained a *farman* from the king of Golconda for the establishment of a French settle-

ment at Masulipatam. But his subsequent conduct led him to be suspected of having misappropriated a large amount of money, and in April, 1670, Caron sent Goujon and Martin to Hyderabad and Masulipatam to enquire into the Macara affair and to take charge of the settlement at the latter place. They arrived at Masulipatam on the 7th August, 1670, and it was soon after their arrival that Sher Khan Lody opened negotiations with them for the establishment of a settlement at Pondicherry. As Martin states in his diary, "A little after our arrival at Masulipatam we were solicited by Sher Khan Lody, Governor for the king of Bijapur of the province of Valkondapuram.....to go and establish ourselves on his territory, where there are good manufacturers of cotton textiles. This Prince promised us advantageous terms to carry on commerce there."[1] Although they were new-comers on the Coromandel coast and did not know the country very well, the two French merchants were anxious not to lose any opportunity for extending their Company's trade and commerce. They accordingly sent an Armenian, one of the party of Macara, to see the place personally and report. The latter returned and reported about the goodness of the climate and the fine quality and large quantity of the cotton manufactures in the locality. He was also accompanied by a Tamil representative from Sher Khan with a letter confirming the offer previously made. By that time Goujon had died (28th September, 1670), being succeeded by Martin as the Chief of the Masulipatam settlement, and it was Martin who had to make a decision about the offer of Sher Khan. Nothing, however, could be done without definite orders from Caron, to whom he wrote

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, I, p. 294.

for advice. At the same time he replied to Sher Khan that he had informed his superior authorities about the offer, which he accepted in anticipation, and that in 2 or 3 months' time he would be in a position to give a more positive reply. However, under the influence of the Banian agent at Surat, Samson, Caron wanted to concentrate the whole of the Company's trade and commerce at Surat and did not like to establish more settlements at distant places. So, no reply was sent to Martin regarding Sher Khan's offer. But Martin, being anxious not to lose the opportunity completely, carried on a prolonged correspondence with Sher Khan with great tact and prudence in order to keep him friendly towards the French.[1] The actual establishment of the French at Pondicherry more than two years later was due to a large extent to the long and patient diplomacy of Martin during the intervening period.

Sher Khan on his side was all along hopeful that the French would ultimately come and establish a settlement on his territory. As soon as he heard the news of the capture of St. Thomé (25th July, 1672), he wrote to de la Haye, expressing great friendship for the French and renewing his old offer. De la Haye also considered it a good opportunity, not so much to establish a settlement for trade and commerce, as to procure provisions and munitions for the relief of St. Thomé. So at the beginning of August, 1672, he sent one of his officers to Pondicherry for the purpose. This was the first visit of a Frenchman to Pondicherry. His name is not known, but the fact of his visit is mentioned in the *Mémoires* of Bellanger de l'Espinay. At Pondicherry he possibly lived in the old building left by the Danes. He remained there for two months

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*, I, p. 295.

only, and succeeded well in his mission of supplying munitions and provisions to St. Thomé.[1]

In November, 1672, de la Haye decided to send one of his personal guards, Bellanger de l'Espinay, to contact the different rulers of the south in order to gain their help and co-operation for the relief of St. Thomé. Leaving St. Thomé with an able Indian Christian interpreter, Antonio Cattel, he first reached the territory of the Nayak of Tanjore, from whom, however, he could not gain much for want of money.[2] From there he arrived at Porto Novo on the 2nd December, and a few days later he started for Valikandapuram, the capital of Sher Khan Lody, which he reached on the 18th December.[3] The reception given to this young French officer of 23 was a magnificent one and has been described in a vivid manner in his *Mémoires*.[4] Bellanger de l'Espinay presented the letters from de la Haye and obtained an assurance of full help and co-operation in procuring troops, munitions and provisions for the relief of St. Thomé. On his side Sher Khan was glad that de la Haye had sent a high-ranking representative and was hopeful that the French would this time accept his old offer of establishing a settlement in his principality. The interview ended in a most dramatic manner. As de l'Espinay was going to take his leave, there was announced the arrival of a Dutch merchant named Pitre, who had been sent to persuade Sher Khan to break off negotiations with the French. But in spite of the rich presents which he offered, the Dutch merchant had the humilia-

1 Labernadie—*Le Vieux Pondichery*, pp. 9-10.
2 *Mémoires de Bellanger de l'Espinay*, p. 192.
3 There is a fine picture of the hill fort of Valikandapuram in Labernadie's *Le Vieux Pondichéry*, facing p. 2.
4 *Mémoires de Bellanger de l'Espinay*, p. 199.

tion to be told by Sher Khan in the presence of his rival that he knew the great difference between the French, a war-like nation ruled by a powerful king, and the Dutch, who were mere merchants occupying a little country full of water and enjoying self-government only since the time they were freed from Spanish domination. Sher Khan concluded in an ironical manner and to the great surprise of the representatives of the two rival European nations "that since in Europe the Dutch were the neighbours of the French, they must be so in India, and for that purpose he gave us the place of Pondicherry in order to establish the nation there."[1] Returning to Porto Novo de l'Espinay wrote to de la Haye about the success of his mission, and following the orders of de la Haye he started for Pondicherry, where he arrived on the 4th February, 1673.

That was the beginning of the French establishment at Pondicherry. It must, however, be said that de l'Espinay was not concerned with the foundation of a commercial settlement, but only with procuring munitions and provisions for the relief of St. Thomé. He was quite successful in his immediate object, and on several occasions he sent much-needed supplies to the besieged garrison at St. Thomé. On the 30th June, 1673, de la Haye himself came to Pondicherry on board *Le Breton*, eluding the pursuit of the Dutch fleet lying before St. Thomé, while returning from Masulipatam. He expressed great satisfaction at the work of de l'Espinay and started for St. Thomé on the next day. In January, 1674, de l'Espinay wrote to de la Haye to send him an auxiliary,[2] and the latter selected Martin as the man most suitable for the purpose. The exact

1 *Mémoires de Bellanger de l'Espinay*, p. 204.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 210.

relationship between Martin and de l'Espinay is not clear, but they worked in good accord, and we have seen already how they tried their best to send all possible help to St. Thomé. After the capitulation of that place de l'Espinay was recalled by de la Haye, with whom he sailed back to France, and only Martin with half a dozen Frenchmen remained at Pondicherry. Both Baron and de la Haye agreed that Martin should remain at Pondicherry so as to preserve for the French this newly acquired place on the Coromandel coast. Later on the handful of Frenchmen at Pondicherry were reinforced by others who came from Madras with Baron, including the crew of the frigate, *La Diligente*, and by a few others who escaped from Dutch prisons in Ceylon and Batavia.

### 6. *Martin at Pondicherry.*

The first task of Martin after the departure of de la Haye was somehow to maintain the small French establishment at Pondicherry till opportunities arose for acquiring better and more advantageous positions on the Coromandel coast. One such opportunity arose, as has been noted already, when Chinapelli Mirza opened negotiations with Baron for the cession of St. Thomé to the French. The negotiations, however, had a difficult sailing because of the opposition of the Dutch, who had great influence at the Court of Golconda, and by the time of Baron's departure from Pondicherry it became quite clear that there was little chance of the negotiations ending in success. Still some hopes lingered on till August (1675) when Martin received definite news from Golconda that the Dutch had completely won over the chief minister, Madanna, and had persuaded the latter not only to break off negotiations with the

French but also to send out orders for the complete destruction of St. Thomé so as to prevent a return of the French. Although the French had been driven out of St. Thomé, the Dutch were not absolutely free from all anxiety, as they had good grounds to fear that after the conclusion of peace in Europe the French might send another expeditionary force to reconquer the place, at a time when it would no longer be possible for the Dutch to render any help to the king of Golconda. So they exerted all their influence at the Court to induce it to agree to a complete demolition of the town. They had at the time, as the Chief of their settlement at Bagnagar (the capital of Golconda) "a man of enterprise, who had been brought up there from his early youth, and who could speak the languages and knew the principal nobles."[1] His great powers of diplomacy and perseverance and the rich presents he offered to Madanna ultimately decided the king to send out orders for the demolition of St. Thomé, not only the fortifications but even the ordinary houses and churches, including the beautiful Cathedral Church dedicated to the Apostle St. Thomas. The Dutch even offered their active help in this work of demolition. Orders for the destruction of the town were received by Chinapelli Mirza in September, 1675, but he was at first unwilling to carry them out, and represented to the Court that it would be detrimental to the honour and interests of the king to destroy such a beautiful town. He even put forward the argument that the work of demolition would be very expensive, hoping thereby to be able to persuade the niggardly minister to alter his decision. But nothing availed, and the work of demolition started in the same month.

[1] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 23.

Martin suspects that the English of Madras also had urged upon the Court of Golconda the necessity of completely destroying St. Thomé, although he says that he has no definite proof. He bases his suspicion on the fact that the destruction of St. Thomé was to the advantage of the English by the elimination of a rival settlement close to Madras and by making the people of St. Thomé come and live in the English settlement.[1] Froidevaux in his Introduction to the *Mémoires* of Francois Martin (p. xv) states, " who will dare, in default of an unanswerable document, to support an accusation about which Martin declares not to have any definite information?" As a matter of fact, the share of English responsibility for the destruction of St. Thomé is brought out most conclusively by the letters of Langhorn, the Governor of Madras, to Venkatapati, the English political agent at the Court of Golconda.[2]

The work of démolition of St. Thomé went on from September to December, 1675. To help the Golconda workers the Dutch sent their own men under the charge of Jager, who had served as engineer for fortifying the pagoda of Triplicane during the second siege of St. Thomé.[3] In December some French officers, who went to Madras to return to Europe on English vessels, visited St. Thomé, which they found so thoroughly destroyed that the only thing they could recognise in the once flourishing town was the Royal Gate.

After the capitulation of St. Thomé there arose an unexpected opportunity for the French to establish

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 24.

2 Love—*Vestiges of Old Madras*, I, pp. 335-38, quoting from Fac. Rec. F. St. G., letters dated 13th Oct. 1674, 21st Nov. 1674, 11th Feb., 1674/5, 9th Oct. 1675.

3 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 26.

themselves on a secure footing in Bengal, but they could not take advantage of it for want of resources. It will be remembered that while de la Haye was returning from Masulipatam with two ships, *Le Breton* and *Le Flamand*, the latter broke away under the stress of weather and took refuge in the roadstead of Balasore, where sometime later she was captured by the Dutch in violation of the laws of neutrality and of the definite assurances of protection of the local authorities against any enemy attacks. Duplessis, an officer on board the French vessel, who had escaped capture, went to Dacca to complain to the Mughal Viceroy there, Shayista Khan, about the illegal action of the Dutch and to demand compensation. His case was strengthened by letters from the local authorities at Balasore, and ultimately he obtained an assurance from the Viceroy that the Dutch would be compelled to return the ship they had captured. Duplessis also obtained a *farman* for the French Company to establish settlements at all the commercial centres of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.[1] Duplessis was an energetic man, and hoping that the Company would accept such an unlooked-for opportunity he even took possession of sites for the establishment of settlements at Dacca, Kasimbazar, Hugli and Balasore.[2] But to his repeated letters to Surat he received no reply, and having come to the end of his resources he had to leave Bengal, with the few other Frenchmen there were with him, on board a country vessel captured at Hugli. The party arrived at Pondicherry on the 9th December, 1674. Duplessis told Martin that only a man of enterprise and some money were needed to lay the foundation of French settlements

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin* I. p. 649.
2 *Ibid.*, II. p. 5.

in Bengal. But, as Martin regrets, the Company was reduced to such extremities at the moment that nothing could be done even to take advantage of the very favourable *farman* granted by the Mughal Viceroy. In fact, it was not till 15 years later that the foundations of French settlements in Bengal were laid by Bourreau Deslandes.

About the same time that negotiations were started for the cession of St. Thomé there arose another opportunity for the French to acquire an old-established settlement on the Coromandel coast. At the beginning of 1675 Martin received letters from the Nayak of Madura that if France sent out another naval squadron to the East and if the French gave him adequate help to drive out the Dutch and the Danes from his territory, he would in exchange grant them either Negapatam or Tranquebar, both lying in his dominions, the first being occupied by the Dutch and the second by the Danes. In the proposal, as Martin states, "the Nayak looked to his own interests and we would have also found ours,"[1] nor was it very difficult to seize Tranquebar from the Danes, since the place had but a poor garrison and its capture was not likely to lead to any serious consequences as would have followed from the capture of Negapatam. But the French were at the time not in a position to undertake any large-scale military enterprise, and so Martin simply wrote to the Nayak thanking him for the proposal and tried to cultivate friendly relations with him till a more favourable moment for action. But that moment never came, partly because of the sudden political changes in south India after this time, and partly because of the fact that after the conclusion of peace in Europe the Danes

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 9.

strengthened their fortifications at Tranquebar so as to protect it from any surprise French attack. Many years before, shortly after the establishment of the French Company, Colbert had received a non-official proposal that the king of Denmark was willing to sell the settlement at Tranquebar, but the proposal fizzled out, and neither then nor in 1675 was Tranquebar destined to fall into the hands of the French.[1]

Even before the destruction of St. Thomé had commenced Martin decided to make the best of his opportunity at Pondicherry. He fully realised the advantages and disadvantages of his position. He had only 80 Frenchmen with him, after Baron's departure for Surat, lodged in the old house of the Danish settlement, neither spacious nor well-defended. He had plenty of money at his disposal after the payment of Chevreuil's bill at Golconda and of his own drawn on the Surat settlement, but this money could not be utilised for trade and commerce because of the war with the Dutch. At Pondicherry the French were to live constantly on the defensive against a surprise attack by the Dutch or the ruler of Jinji which might come any moment. No reliance could be put on the petty rulers of the neighbourhood who were constantly at war with one another and made and unmade alliances with a starling rapidity.[2] The only security for the French was the friendly protection of Sher Khan, and out of their own interest they had to remain in the closest alliance with him.

In November, 1674, Sher Khan informed Martin that the Golconda merchant on whom Chevreuil had

[1] For the earlier project of acquisition of Tranquebar see Froidevaux —*Un projet d'acquisition de Tranquebar par la France en* 1669.

[2] *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, pp. 4-5.

drawn the bill had paid the money as also the merchants of the Surat settlement on whom Martin had drawn a bill for Rs. 40,000. He also asked Martin to come to Valikandapuram to settle the accounts of the advances of money previously made to him.[1] In April, 1675, Martin and Sher Khan held conference, at which, besides the important political projects discussed as noted already, the early accounts of the French were settled to the advantage of Sher Khan, according to the instructions of Baron and in view of the services he had rendered.[2] After the payment of money at Golconda and Surat the French had a large sum in their hands, which they could not utilise because of the war with the Dutch. Martin thought of turning the money to the best advantage by starting the manufacture of dyes and painted cloth. He collected some workers for the purpose and built some manufactories for them within the settlement to work under shelter.[3] But even then there was a large amount lying idle. Following instructions from Baron a part of it was lent to Sher Khan at an interest of 18% per annum, which was quite a moderate rate according to the market conditions of the time.[4] At the time of his departure from the Coromandel coast de la Haye had given to Martin money for the subsistence of four Indian captains for their gallant and loyal service at St. Thomé. In order to utilise this money to the best advantage Martin farmed a village, named Paccamodiampet, from Sher Khan within half an hour's reach from Pondicherry.[5]

1 *Mémoires de François Martin*, II, pp. 3-4.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
5 *Ibid.*, pp. 19 and 25.

Although quiet and unobtrusive the little French settlement at Pondicherry did not fail to rouse the suspicion and jealousy of the Dutch, who were determined to drive the French out completely from the Coromandel coast. Martin Pit, the Chief of the Dutch settlement at Tegnapatam, who had taken an active part in the second siege of St. Thomé, paid a visit to Pondicherry in November, 1674.[1] Although it was meant to be a friendly visit, it was really intended to see what the French were doing at Pondicherry and how far their little settlement there could be a potential source of danger to Dutch interests on the Coromandel coast. However, he was well-received and entertained and Martin even paid him a return visit at Tegnapatam in December.[2] In May, 1675, the French received warnings that the Dutch would shortly come and attack Pondicherry. They accordingly kept themselves on the alert and prepared for resistance. But nothing untoward happened, except that a few Dutch ships anchored before Pondicherry and then left the place without any apparent reason.

### 7. *First Step in the Policy of Intervention.*

We have already noted the political ideas of Baron. When he left the Coromandel coast for Surat, he entrusted the negotiations he had started to Francois Martin, whom he knew to be a man who fully understood and appreciated his ideas and at the same time enterprising and resourceful enough to put them into execution. Martin, like Baron, realised that in the political unsettlement of the time it was necessary for

1 *Mémoires de Francois Martin*, II, p. 4.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

the French in the interest of their commercial establishments in India to take advantage of the quarrels among the Indian Princes, to ally themselves actively with one as against the other. The idea was not to build up an empire, which was in fact too fantastic to be attempted by a realist like Martin or Baron. It was rather to adopt the policy of a king-maker. In 1676 Martin got his first opportunity to intervene in Indian politics. At the same time it must be admitted that the policy of intervention was in a way forced upon him, as without it there was the gravest risk of the French losing their only shelter on the Coromandel coast. Towards the end of 1675 there took place a palace revolution in Bijapur. There were two parties in the government, the Deccani, led by Khawas Khan, the chief minister, and the Pathan, under the leadership of Buhlul Khan, the commander-in-chief. The king was a mere child under the tutelage of his mother, who, chafing at the domination of the all-powerful minister, entered into a conspiracy with his rival to get rid of Khawas Khan. Khawas Khan was murdered, and this event was immediately followed by the outbreak of troubles, which ultimately ended in the conquest of the kingdom by the Mughal Emperor. The faction fighting at the Court had its immediate repercussions on the Coromandel coast, as Sher Khan Lody was a relative of Buhlul Khan, while Nasir Mohammed, the Governor of Jinji, was the brother of Khawas Khan. Both the princes prepared for war, and the French at Pondicherry were inevitably dragged into the contest. They had been too long allied with Sher Khan to be able to avoid taking sides in the conflict. If Nasir Mohammed came out victorious, it would have definitely meant the end of the French establishment on the Coromandel

coast. On the other hand Sher Khan had rendered great help to the French, even at the cost of antagonising the Dutch, and gratitude demanded that they should now come to the help of a man who had given them their only shelter on the Coromandel coast. At the same time the policy of intervention fitted in with the ideas of Baron and Martin as conducive to the interests of the French Company in India and was accordingly accepted in spite of the prohibition of the Company to undertake any enterprise till the end of the war in Europe.[1]

It was the conflict between Sher Khan and Nasir Mohammed which led to the strengthening of the defences of Pondicherry, exposed as it was to a surprise attack by the men of Jinji. The walls surrounding the settlement, which had crumbled down completely, were raised again, and the French were permitted to construct a bastion to the north of the settlement. They also received from Sher Khan 300 Indian troops to defend the place. In September, 1676, the French were faced with a fateful decision when Sher Khan called upon them to capture the fort of Valdaour, about three leagues from Pondicherry and belonging to the Governor of Jinji. Both gratitude and self-interest dictated them to obey the summons. Martin wanted a written document to show that the French were attacking Valdaour not on their own account but entirely on behalf of Sher Khan, and having received it he made a surprise attack on that reputed fort on the night of the 24th September, 1676. He had with him only 45 Frenchmen and 60 Indian troops. The fort was taken by escalade, and although this victory was neither very

1 Kaeppelin—*La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, p. 159.

striking from the military point of view for the nation of Condé and Turenne, nor lasting in result because of later events, it had nonetheless its own importance as the first application of the political ideas of Baron and Martin. The capture of the fort of Valdaour opened the way for further conquests by Sher Khan, who expressed his gratitude towards the French in terms not in the least exaggerated. It is true that Sher Khan's victories were ephemeral or rather his victories hastened his own downfall. The defeated rival surrendered his territory to the king of Golconda who invoked the help of the Marathas, and before the furious onslought of the latter Sher Khan could not put up any resistance at all. Thus the victory of Valdaour did not lead to the achievement of the French objective. But still it deserves a special mention in history, as marking the beginning of that policy of intervention, which in the next century Dupleix pursued in a more brilliant manner and on a much larger scale, but of which he was not certainly the first initiator.

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